

Man is not complete until he is acquainted with the sciences by which he is able to act. The best of these is the science of Divine Oneness. It is the greatest knowledge, the medicine of the hearts, the basis for righteous actions, and the foundation of spiritual wayfaring unto the Lord of the worlds.

—Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah

In *The Differences between the Ash'aris & Maturidis*, Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, Imam Ibn Kamal Pasha identifies twelve areas where the Imams of Ahl al-Sunna—Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi—have subtly differed in theology. Topics discussed include amongst others, the attributes and actions of Allah, the question of good and evil, the role of the human intellect, man's capabilities and his condition in the Hereafter.

Invaluable in elaborating on these differences is the expert commentary of leading contemporary theologian Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah in which he succinctly explains the causes of the disagreements and their levels, allowing the reader to benefit from the objective of the treatise.

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THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ASH'ARIS & MATURIDIS

by Imam Shams al-Din Ahmad b. Sulayman Kamal Pasha & Commentary by Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah

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b. Sulaymān Kamāl Pāshā* 

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الامام شمس الدين احمد بن سليمان المعروف بابن كمال باشا

Commentary by  
Shaykh Sa'īd 'Abd al-Laṭīf Foudah

Author's Bibliography by  
Shaykh Galāl 'Alī 'Āmer al-Jihānī

Translated by Abdul Aziz Suraqah

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By Imam Shams al-Din Ahmad b. Sulayman Kamal Pasha

Commentary by:  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	v
FOREWORD	7
A BIOGRAPHY OF IBN KAMĀL PĀSHĀ	9
INTRODUCTION	11
THE BILINGUAL TEXT OF IBN KAMĀL PĀSHĀ'S ESSAY	12
AHL AL-SUNNA AND THEIR SALIENT FEATURES	22
CHAPTER I	32
THE ATTRIBUTE OF CREATION [TAKWĪN]	
CHAPTER II	39
ON HEARING THE SPEECH OF ALLAH	
CHAPTER III	42
ON THE ATTRIBUTE OF WISDOM	
CHAPTER IV	47
ON ALLAH'S PLEASURE WITH OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE	
CHAPTER V	51
ON THAT IN WHICH THERE IS NO CAPACITY TO ENDURE	
CHAPTER VI	55
ON GOOD AND EVIL AND THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT	
CHAPTER VII	62
ON THE WRETCHED AND FELICITOUS	
CHAPTER VIII	64
ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PARDONING DISBELIEF	
CHAPTER IX	68
ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PUNISHING THE BELIEVERS AND REWARDING THE DISBELIEVERS AND THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT	
CHAPTER X	70
ON THE NAME, THE THING NAMED, AND THE ACT OF NAMING	
CHAPTER XI	72
ON THE CONDITION OF BEING MALE FOR THE RANK OF PROPHETHOOD	
CHAPTER XII	77
ON THE ACTIONS OF THE CREATOR AND THE ACTIONS OF THE CREATION	
CONCLUSION	80

APPENDIX: TAKLĪF, DALĪL AL-FIṬRA	81
AND THE IMAMS OF AHL AL-SUNNA	
AUTHOR'S BIBLIOGRAPHY	90
BY SHAYKH GALĀL 'ALĪ 'ĀMER AL-JIHĀNĪ	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92

## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

ا/آ/ي	ā	ظ	z
ب	b	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	th	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
ح	ḥ	ك	k
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	ه	h
ز	z	و	w/ū
س	s	ي	y/ī
ش	sh	ة	a
ص	ṣ	ء	’
ض	ḍ	أ	a/u
ط	ṭ	إ	i

## HONORIFIC PHRASES



Exalted and Sublime is He  
Allah's prayers and salutations  
be upon him



Peace be upon him



May Allah be pleased with him



May Allah be pleased with her



May Allah be pleased with them both



May Allah be pleased with them

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**S**HAYKH Sa'īd 'Abd al-Laṭīf Foudah is a leading scholar of Islamic theology [*ilm al-kalām*], logic [*mantīq*] and legal theory [*uṣūl al-fiqh*], and one of the most meticulous experts of our times on the creed of Ibn Taymiyya.

Shaykh Sa'īd was born in 1967 CE in the city of Haifa, Palestine, and moved at a very young age with his parents to Amman, Jordan, where he still lives and teaches today. The Shaykh's education began at a very early age. He first studied jurisprudence of the Shāfi'i school, Arabic grammar, and read most of the Qur'an with Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Zuhayrī—may Allah have mercy upon him.



Following this, Shaykh Foudah was sent to the expert of canonical readings of the Qur'an, Shaykh Sa'īd al-'Anbaṭāwī—may Allah have mercy upon him. He memorized *Tuḥfa al-Atfāl* and *al-Jazariyya* with him, both in *tajwīd* (Qur'anic elocution), and also read the Qur'an to him and heard him read it many times to his students. After this, Shaykh Foudah memorized over two thirds of the Qur'an, *al-Kharīda al-Bahīyya*, and *Jawhara al-Tawḥīd* under his tutelage. During that time, Shaykh Sa'īd al-'Anbaṭāwī was not teaching the science of *tawḥīd* (Divine Oneness) to anyone besides Shaykh Sa'īd, because of the focus and desire his student had in that subject. Once, he brought [Aḥmad] al-Dardīr's explanation of the *Kharīda* and requested Shaykh Sa'īd to summarize it so it could be of some benefit to the students. By Allah's grace, Shaykh Sa'īd did that and presented it to his teacher who then requested that he start teaching it to the students of knowledge. Under him Shaykh Sa'īd also studied the basics of the recitation of the Warsh canonical reading by memorizing some small didactic texts, and read Sūra al-Fātiḥa, al-Baqara, and the beginning of Sūra Āl-Imrān to him in Warsh.

Shaykh Sa'īd went on to meet the Shaykh of the Shādhilī Sufi order in Jordan, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Jamāl, who had made firm the Sunni way against those that have deviated from it. Under him, Shaykh Sa'īd studied approximately three fourths of *Kitāb al-Ikhtiyār* of al-Mawṣilī in the tradition of the Ḥanafī school of law.

From amongst his other teachers are the former Mufti of Jordan, Shaykh Nūḥ 'Alī Salmān al-Qudāh, with whom he has studied parts of the *Sharḥ al-Minhāj* of Imam al-Nawawī.

Shaykh Sa'īd also met the verifying scholar Shaykh Ibrāhīm Khalīfa who is well versed in the sciences of *tafsīr* (explanation of the Qur'an), legal theory, logic, rhetoric, and grammar upon the way of the early scholars. He has given the Shaykh an *ijāza* (formal authorization) in numerous sciences such as *tafsīr*, the explanation of Hadith, the science of *tawḥīd* and its major works, the science of *uṣūl*, logic, rhetoric, and other sciences. He said that he had not given an *ijāza* (certificate) of its likes to anyone before him. In this *ijāza*, he ordered Shaykh Sa'īd to stand against the innovators and those that oppose the people of the Sunna.

There are many other Shaykhs that Shaykh Sa'īd has met and has a strong connection with such as: Shaykh 'Abd al-Hādī Kharsa and Shaykh Adīb Kallās—may Allah have mercy upon him—in Syria, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Ānī (from Iraq)—one of the students of Shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Mudarris—may Allah have mercy upon him, the Mufti of Egypt, Shaykh 'Alī Jumu'a, Shaykh 'Abd al-Bā'ith al-Kittānī and Dr. 'Umar Kāmil. He has also met the virtuous Shaykh Muhammad Sāliḥ al-Gharsī of Turkey and has written correspondence with Shaykh Wahba al-Ghawjī of Syria—may Allah have mercy upon him—who lauded him and his works and requested that he write some books in defence of the way of *Ahl al-Sunna* and refute some who have attacked Imam al-Rāzī. He has also had a long and warm relationship for years with the virtuous Shaykhs; Ḥabīb 'Umar bin Ḥafīz, Ḥabīb 'Alī al-Jifrī, and other scholars of Yemen.





## FOREWORD

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**A**LL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH, the Lord of the worlds. May salutations and prayers be upon our liege lord Muhammad, the best of the Prophets and Messengers, and upon those who follow him and receive guidance from him until the Last Day.

Man is not complete until he is acquainted with the sciences by which he is able to act. The most superior of the sciences is the science of Divine Oneness [*tawhīd*], especially if it is in accordance with the way of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a—those who are the crown jewel and the best of those who follow the Prophetic practices of the Prophet ﷺ and who are the most famous of those who reaped the fruits of their efforts in the lofty Islamic sciences. They codified and wrote books on these sciences until, and as a result, they become well-known among the people; no one is ignorant of them save one who is unaware of their value; and no one admits it grudgingly save he who does not long for obtaining the lofty rewards and levels on the Day of Judgment.

The best of the sciences is the science of Divine Oneness. It is the greatest knowledge [*al-fiqh al-akbar*]. It is the medicine of the hearts, the basis for righteous actions, and the foundation of spiritual wayfaring unto the Lord of the worlds. Now, the wayfarer who undertakes a path of action will not be upright until he corrects his beliefs; and by mastering the detailed issues he will ascend further in highness and loftiness and the lights of those sciences will shine upon him. By knowledge one is able to gain talents that were unachieved and ascent to higher spiritual degrees; and Allah increases with His bounty whom He wills.

I ask Allah, the Most Kind, the Well-Informed, to accept this work by His grace, bounty, and generosity, and to place it in the scales of our good deeds. And may prayers and salutations be upon the most noble of the Prophets and Messengers; their seal and the one at their forefront on the Day of Judgment: our liege lord Muhammad, and upon his family, his Companions, and those who love them for love of him and follow their guidance.

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## A BIOGRAPHY OF IBN KAMĀL PĀSHĀ

**HE** IS THE IMAM, the scholar, the erudite: Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Sulaymān b. Kamāl Pāshā (873-940 H.) of the Turkish lands. He is ascribed to his grandfather and was well known as Ibn Kamāl Pāshā Zādeh, or Ibn Kamāl Vizier. He was known as the *Muftī al-Thaqalayn* (the Mufti of men and jinn) due to his deep knowledge, penetrating insight into the many facets of the Sacred Law, and his sharpness in debate. Around the year 926 H., Sultan Sulaymān al-Qānūnī (d. 974 H.) gave him the school of his grandfather, Sultan Bāyazīd Khān the Second (d. 918 H.). He remained there until he was appointed as the Mufti of Constantinople (in other words, the Mufti of the Ottoman Empire) and in addition, he was appointed as the Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, which occurred after the death of Mawlā 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī al-Jamālī, better known as Zanbīlī 'Alī Effendi, in the year 932 H.

He held that position until his death during the reign of Sultan Sulaymān al-Qānūnī. He learned from many famous scholars, such as Mawlā Luṭfī al-Mazbūr al-Tūqānī (d. 900 H.), Mawlā Muṣliḥ al-Dīn (Muṣṭafā) al-Qaṣṭalānī (d. 901 H.), Mawlā Muḥyī al-Dīn Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm, better known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb or Khaṭīb Zādeh (d. 901 H.), Mawlā Sinān al-Dīn Yūsuf, better known as Ibn al-Mu'arrāf or 'Araf Zādeh.

His students include Mawlā Muḥyī al-Dīn Pāshā al-Jamālī (d. 941 H.) and Mawlā Sa'dullāh b. 'Isā, better known as Sa'dī Chalabī (d. 945 H.) who assumed the position of Shaykh al-Islam after the death of his Shaykh, Ibn Kamāl. Another student of his is the famous Qur'anic exegete who held the position of Shaykh al-Islam for a long time, Abū al-Su'ūd al-'Imādī (d. 982 H.). Some scholars exaggerated and gave preference to Ibn Kamāl Pāshā over the senior scholars of the East and West, such as al-Taftazānī and Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī. He was an outspoken defender of the creed of Ahl al-Sunna and took a severe stance against the Rāfiḍa [Shi'a], even participating in the battle of Jāldarayn against the Safavid [Empire].

He wrote many books, such as *al-Tajrīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *Tahqīq al-Kalām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, a gloss on the general issues of *al-Maqāṣid* and *al-Mawāqif*, and a gloss on the section of Divinity in *al-Mawāqif*. He wrote many essays and authored a complete Qur'anic exegesis and commentaries on particular chapters of the Qur'an. He wrote a super-commentary on al-Bayḍāwī's exegesis and a super-commentary on al-Sayyid al-Sharīf's gloss on *al-Kashāf*. In the science of Ḥadīth and jurisprudence he has many written works, such as his commentary on *Maṣābiḥ al-Sunna*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, and *Iṣlāḥ al-Wiqāya* in jurisprudence. In legal theory he wrote *al-Taghyīr wal-Tanqīḥ* and its commentary and a gloss on the first part of al-Taftazānī's *al-Talwīḥ*. He also wrote many books on grammar, morphology, philosophy, logic, Sufism, history, and hagiography.



## INTRODUCTION

**A**LL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH, the Lord of the worlds. May salutations and prayers be upon our liege lord Muhammad, the best of the Prophets and Messengers, and upon those who follow him and receive guidance from him until the Last Day.

This is an essay taken from the collected works of the Imam and scholar, Ibn Kamāl Pāshā, one of the famous scholars of the Ottoman period and a contemporary of Imam al-Suyūṭī. Both he and al-Suyūṭī were well-known in their time for possessing comprehensive knowledge in the various sciences. Scholars have listed many comparisons between the two as well as the matters in which one of them was held stronger than the other. It is not hidden to the one who is aware of their conditions, the distinction and superiority that they each have over the other in various sciences. In general, Ibn Kamāl Pāshā is considered more knowledgeable in the rational sciences, whereas Imam al-Suyūṭī is considered stronger in the textual sciences. Nevertheless, both have a guarded and elevated position.

I was made aware of this short treatise by some who had sat in my lessons. This treatise is distinguished by its grace and precision—as are all of Ibn Kamāl Pāshā's books. After reading this book, I wished to write a commentary on it to gift students of knowledge. Perhaps Allah ﷻ will allow both us and him to benefit from it, and will write our reward with Him. Indeed, He is the One who answers supplications.

Since the treatise is succinct, I have endeavoured to make the commentary correspondingly succinct and to the point, so if a beginner student in this science reads it, he will attain its objective and will grasp the general ideas expressed in this subject and he will know both the causes of the disagreements and their respective levels. The benefits to be found in this are not hidden to anyone.

## THE ESSAY OF IBN KAMĀL PĀSHĀ

**Y**OU SHOULD KNOW THAT Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī is the Imam of Ahl al-Sunna and at their forefront, followed by Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. Know also—as some of our Shaykhs have mentioned to us, may Allah have mercy upon them—that the companions of al-Shāfiʿī and his followers follow him (Abū al-Ḥasan) in matters of doctrine, and they follow al-Shāfiʿī in matters of law. The companions of Abū Ḥanīfa follow Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr in doctrine and follow Abū Ḥanīfa in law. This is what some of our Shaykhs have benefited us with.

And we beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to grant these two noble Imams a generous reward for what they have expended of sincere advice to the muslims. We beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to include us among those perform the actions of those granted Divine success; those who traverse the path of the rightly-guided and realized ones; by His largess, bounty, and generosity—*Amīn!*

There is no contention between the two Shaykhs and their followers in the fundamentals except in twelve issues.

**One:** Al-Māturīdī said that *takwīn* is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah's Entity, as do all of His attributes, and that it is distinct from that which is brought into existence [*mukawwan*], and that it is linked with that which is brought into existence in the world and every part of it [the world] from the time of its inception. Just as Allah's will is eternal and linked with that which is willed at the time of its existence, so too is His eternal omnipotence with that which is decreed.

Al-Ashʿarī said that it is a contingent attribute that does not subsist with Allah's Entity, and that according to him it is from the attributes of action and not from the eternal attributes. As he saw it, the attributes of action are all contingent, such as *takwīn* and bringing into existence and the emergence of the world with the statement ﴿be﴾.


## رسالة ابن كمال باشا

اعلم أن الشيخ أبا الحسن الأشعري إمام أهل السنة ومقدمهم، ثم الشيخ أو منصور الماتريدي، وأن أصحاب الشافعي وأتباعه تابعون له في الأصول وللشافعي في الفروع، وأن أصحاب أبي حنيفة تابعون للشيخ أبي منصور الماتريدي في الأصول ولأبي حنيفة في الفروع، كذا أفادنا بعض مشايخنا رحمه الله تعالى.

وندعو الله تعالى أن يكتب لهذين الإمامين العلمين الثواب الجزيل على ما بذلوه من النصح للمسلمين، وندعو الله تعالى أن يكتب لنا الاندراج في أعمال الموفقين والسائرين على طريق المهتدين المحققين، بفضلله وكرمه ومَنِّه. آمين.

ولا نزاع بين الشيخين واتباعهما في الأصول إلا في اثنتي عشرة مسألة:  
الأولى: قال الماتريدي: التكوين صفة أزلية قائمة بذات الله تعالى كجميع صفاته، وهو غير المكوّن، ويتعلق بالمكوّن من العالم وكل جزء منه وقت وجوده، كما أنّ إرادة الله أزلية تتعلق بالمرادات بوقت وجودها وكذا قدرته تعالى الأزلية مع مقدوراتها.  
وقال الأشعري: إنها صفة حادثة غير قائمة بذات الله تعالى، وهي من الصفات الفعلية عنده لا من الصفات الأزلية. والصفات الفعلية كلها حادثة كالتكوين والإيجاد ويتعلق وجود العالم بخطاب كُنْ.

**Two:** Al-Māturīdī said that the speech of Allah, the Exalted, is not heard; rather, what is heard is that which points to it.

Al-Ash'arī said that it is heard—as is well known in the story of Mūsā .

Ibn Fūrak said: “Two things are heard during the recitation of the reader: the voice of the reader, and the speech of Allah, the Exalted.”

Al-Qādī [Abu Bakr] al-Bāqillānī said: “Allah’s speech is not heard in the conventional sense; rather, it is possible for Allah to allow any of His creation that He wills to hear [it], contrary to conventional means and [contrary to it being] with the medium of letters and sound.”

Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and those who follow him said: “Allah’s speech is not heard at all.” This was the view chosen by Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī—as found in *al-Bidāya*.

**Three:** Al-Māturīdī said that the Creator of the universe is described with wisdom [*ḥikma*], whether that wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge [*ilm*] or the meaning of perfect mastery [*ihkām*].

Al-Ash'arī said that if wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge, then it is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah’s Entity, Exalted is He, and if it takes the meaning of perfect mastery then it is a contingent quality akin to *takwīn*, and the Entity of the Creator is not described with it.



المسألة الثانية: قال الماتريدي: كلام الله تعالى ليس بمسموع، وإنما المسموع الدالُّ عليه.

وقال الأشعري: مسموعٌ كما هو المشهور من حكاية موسى.

قال ابن فورك: المسموع عند قراءة القارئ شيئان: صوت القارئ وكلام الله تعالى.

وقال القاضي الباقلاني: كلام الله غير مسموع على العادة الجارية، ولكن يجوز أن يُسمع الله تعالى مَنْ شاء مِنْ خلقه على خلاف قياس العادة من غير واسطة الحروف والصوت.

وقال أبو إسحاق الإسفراييني وَمَنْ تبعه: إنَّ كلام الله تعالى غير مسموع أصلاً، وهو اختيار الشيخ أبي منصور الماتريدي، كذا في البداية.

المسألة الثالثة: قال الماتريدي: صانعُ العالم موصوفٌ بالحكمة سواءً كانت الحكمة، بمعنى العلم أو بمعنى الإحكام.

وقال الأشعري: إن كانت الحكمة بمعنى العلم فهي صفة أزلية قائمة بذات الله تعالى، وإن كانت بمعنى الإحكام فهي صفة حادثّة من قبيل التكوين، لا يوصف ذات الباري بها.

**Four:** Al-Māturīdī said that Allah wills obedience or disobedience for all things, be they essences or accidents; however, obedience occurs by Allah's will and decree, His pre-ordainment and predestination, and with His pleasure, love, and command, while disobedience occurs by Allah's will and decree and His predestination and pre-ordainment, but not with His pleasure, love, or command.

Al-Ash'arī said that Allah's love and pleasure are inclusive of all things just as His will.

**Five:** According to al-Māturīdī, being tasked [*taklif*] with that in which there is no capacity to endure is impermissible, whereas being burdened with that which cannot be borne is permissible.

According to al-Ash'arī both are permissible.

**Six:** Al-Māturīdī said that some of the rulings that relate to legal accountability [*taklif*] are known by the intellect, because the intellect is a tool by which the goodness and evil of some things can be comprehended, and [it is a tool] by which the obligation of faith is comprehended, as well as [the obligation of] gratitude to the Giver of bounties. The One who makes this known and obligatory is Allah, the Exalted; however, it is through the medium of the intellect—just as the Messenger ﷺ made the obligation[s] known and the One who made [things] obligatory in reality is Allah, the Exalted, however, it was through the medium of the Messenger ﷺ. He [al-Māturīdī] said: "Because of what one sees [of signs] in the creation of the heavens and the earth, no one is excused by ignorance of his Creator," and: "Had Allah not sent a Messenger, it would have still be obligatory for creation to know Him through their intellects."

Al-Ash'arī said that nothing is made an obligation or a prohibition except by the Sacred Law—not the intellect, even if the intellect is able to comprehend the goodness and evil of some things. According to al-Ash'arī, all of the rulings that relate to legal accountability are taken from revelation.

المسألة الرابعة: قال الماتريدي: إن الله تعالى يريد بجميع الكائنات جوهرًا أو عرضاً طاعة أو معصية، إلا أن الطاعة تقع بمشيئة الله تعالى وإرادته وقضائه وقدره ورضائه ومحبته وأمره، وأن المعصية تقع بمشيئة الله تعالى وإرادته وقضائه وقدره لا برضائه ومحبته وأمره.

وقال الأشعري: إن رضاء الله تعالى ومحبته شامل لجميع الكائنات لإرادته.

المسألة الخامسة: تكليف ما لا يُطاق ليس بجائز عند الماتريدي، وتحميل ما لا يطاق عنده جائز.

وكلاهما جائزان عند الأشعري.

المسألة السادسة: قال الماتريدي: بعض الأحكام المتعلقة بالتكليف معلوم بالعقل، لأن العقل آلة يُدرك بها حُسنُ بعض الأشياء وقُبْحُها، وبها يُدركُ وجوبُ الإيمان وشكرُ المنعم، وإن المعرفَّ والموجب هو الله تعالى لكن بواسطة العقل، كما أن الرسول مُعرفُّ الوجوب، والموجب الحقيقي هو الله تعالى لكن بواسطة الرسول ﷺ، حتى قال: (لا عُذْرَ لأحد في الجهل بخالقه لما يرى من خلق السماوات والأرض) (وَلَمْ يَبْعَثِ اللَّهُ رَسُولًا لَوْ جَبَّ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ بِعَقُولِهِمْ).

وقال الأشعري: لا يجب شيء ولا يحرم إلا بالشرع لا بالعقل، وإن كان للعقل أن يُدرك حُسنَ بعض الأشياء وقُبْحُها، وعند الأشعري: جميع الأحكام المتعلقة بالتكليف مُتَلَقَّاةٌ بِالسَّمْعِ.

**Seven:** Al-Māturīdī said that the wretched person could become felicitous and that the felicitous person could become wretched.

Al-Ash'arī said that there is no consideration given to either felicity or wretchedness except during the end [i.e. death] and the requital.

**Eight:** Al-Māturīdī said that it is rationally impermissible for disbelief to be pardoned.

Al-Ash'arī said that it is rationally permissible but textually impermissible.

**Nine:** Al-Māturīdī said it is rationally and textually impermissible for the believers to abide eternally in Hellfire and for the disbelievers to abide in Paradise.

Al-Ash'arī said that it is rationally permissible, but textually impermissible.

**Ten:** Some of the Māturīdīs say that the name and the thing named [*al-ism wal-musammā*] are one.

Al-Ash'arī believed that there is a distinction between the two and [between them and] the "act of naming" [*tasmiya*].

Some of them divided a name into three categories: itself, other than itself, and a third category that is neither itself nor other than it.

There is agreement that the act of naming [*tasmiya*] is other than them [the name and the thing named], and it is what is established with the one named. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.



المسألة السابعة: قال الماتريدي: قد يسعد الشقي وقد يشقى السعيد.  
وقال الأشعري: لا اعتبار بالسعادة والشقاوة إلا عند الخاتمة والعاقبة.

المسألة الثامنة: قال الماتريدي: العفو عن الكفر ليس بجائر عقلاً.  
وقال الأشعري: يجوز عقلاً لا سمعاً.

المسألة التاسعة: قال الماتريدي: تخليد المؤمنين في النار وتخليد الكافرين في الجنة  
لا يجوز عقلاً ولا سمعاً.  
وعند الأشعري يجوز عقلاً، وأما سمعاً فلا يجوز.

المسألة العاشرة: قال بعض الماتريديين: الاسم والمسمى واحد.  
وقال الأشعري بالتغاير بينهما وبين التسمية.  
ومنهم من قسم الاسم إلى ثلاثة أقسام: قسم عينه، وقسم غيره، وقسم ليس  
بعينه ولا غيره.

والاتفاق على أن التسمية غيرهما وهي ما قامت بالمسمي، كذا في بداية الكلام.

**Eleven:** Al-Māturīdī said that being male is a condition for Prophethood, and that consequently, it is impermissible for a woman to be a Prophetess.

Al-Ash'arī said that being male is not a condition for it, and that being female does not negate it. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.

**Twelve:** Al-Māturīdī said that the action of the servant is called acquisition and not creation, and that the action of the Real [Allah] is called creation and not acquisition—and both are inclusive of action.

Al-Ash'arī said that “action” denotes a real bringing into existence and the acquisition of the servant is only called “action” figuratively.

It has been said: “That which is permissible for the All-Powerful to be singularly [described with] is called creation, and that which is impermissible for the All-Powerful to be described with is called acquisition.

المسألة الحادية عشرة: قال الماتريدي: الذكورة شرط في النبوة، حتى لا يجوز أن يكون الأنثى نبياً.

وقال الأشعري: ليست الذكورة شرطاً فيها، والأنوثة لا تُنافيها.  
كذا في بداية الكلام.

المسألة الثانية عشرة: قال الماتريدي: فَعَلُ العبد يُسمَّى كسباً لا خلقاً، وفَعَلُ الحق يُسمَّى خلقاً لا كسباً، والفعل يتناولهما.

وقال الأشعري: الفعل عبارة عن الإيجاد حقيقة، وكسبُ العبد يُسمَّى فعلاً بالملجاز.

وقيل ما يجوز تفردُ القادر به فهو خلقٌ، وما لا يجوز تفردُ القادر به فهو كسبٌ.

## AHL AL-SUNNA AND THEIR SALIENT FEATURES

The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

اعلم أن الشيخ أبا الحسن الأشعري إمام أهل السنة ومقدمهم، ثم الشيخ أو منصور الماتريدي، وأن أصحاب الشافعي وأتباعه تابعون له في الأصول وللشافعي في الفروع، وأن أصحاب أبي حنيفة تابعون للشيخ أبي منصور الماتريدي في الأصول ولأبي حنيفة في الفروع، كذا أفادنا بعض مشايخنا رحمه الله تعالى. وندعو الله تعالى أن يكتب لهذين الإمامين العلمين الثواب الجزيل على ما بذلوه من النصح للمسلمين، وندعو الله تعالى أن يكتب لنا الاندراج في أعمال الموفقين والسائرين على طريق المهتدين المحققين، بفضلهم وكرمهم ومنته. آمين.

You should know that Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī is the Imam of Ahl al-Sunna and at their forefront, followed by Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. Know also—as some of our Shaykhs have mentioned to us, may Allah have mercy upon them—that the companions of al-Shāfi'ī and his followers follow him (Abū al-Ḥasan) in matters of doctrine, and they follow al-Shāfi'ī in matters of law. The companions of Abū Ḥanīfa follow Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr in doctrine and follow Abū Ḥanīfa in law. This is what some of our Shaykhs have benefited us with.

And we beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to grant these two noble Imams a generous reward for what they have expended of sincere advice to the muslims. We beseech Allah, the Exalted, asking Him to include us among those perform the actions of those granted Divine success; those who traverse the path of the rightly-guided and realized ones; by His largess, bounty, and generosity—*Amīn!*

Ahl al-Sunna is the name for the congregation of the muslims. They are the group that mastered the understanding of the Sacred Law and gained a firm foothold in the realities of its fundamentals. They did not deem anything unequivocal and decisive except that which is deemed unequivocal and decisive in the texts of the Sacred Law, and they did not deem as incontrovertible except that which the intellect unhesitatingly affirms in the realm of the rational sciences.

The name Ahl al-Sunna unites a large group of the scholars of Islam; indeed, it is the majority, for when they are compared to other groups, the latter vanishes and fades away, appearing as a grain of sand in the desert or a single drop of water in the oceans.

Included within their fold are an innumerable number of scholars in the myriad sciences such as jurisprudence, Ḥadith, philology, legal theory, logic, Qur'anic exegesis, grammar, literature, and other rational and textual sciences. If someone were to attempt to enumerate them he would be unable to do so in the face of their wide and expansive sea, and his limbs would fall motionless in the face of their bursting waves. What we say here is not mere hyperbole. Anyone who wishes to ascertain this fact needs only to review the books of the notable scholars and historic figures; he shall find that which dazzles his mind and leaves him awestruck, facing the lights of their resplendent and shimmering signs.

The most salient feature that distinguishes Ahl al-Sunna from others is their knowledge of the science of Divine Oneness, which is also called theology or the science pertaining to the fundamentals of the religion. The same may be said regarding their knowledge of legal theory [*uṣūl al-fiqh*]. Of course, the sciences of jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, Ḥadith commentary, and other sciences distinguish them as well, but others also share with them in their investigations and findings in these sciences. What remains is their unique distinction in the science of Divine Oneness.

Some scholars include the science of legal theory [*uṣūl al-fiqh*] with the science of Divine Oneness as a distinguishing feature of Ahl al-Sunna. That is not implausible. Indeed, as I see it, it is essential and verifiable, especially since we know that much of what is found in the science of legal theory is based upon the

science of Divine Oneness, and that the verifying scholars considered the basic precepts in the science of legal theory as issues of doctrine and theology, such as the evidentiary nature of the Book [the Qur'an], the Sunna, and consensus, notwithstanding the fact that the subsidiary branches are also issues of legal theory. The precision of this view is not hidden to the reader.

Most of the key distinctions possessed by the scholars of Ahl al-Sunna in the sciences of Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, Hadith, and other sciences go back to their distinction in these two noble sciences (excluding of course the textual issues that are decisively affirmed to be from the religion). Their distinction in these sciences in one way or another goes back to their distinction in the fundamentals, even if the issues they spoke about were perceived as purely subsidiary or exegetical in nature.

The fundamentals in the science of Divine Oneness that distinguish Ahl al-Sunna from other Islamic sects are noble fundamentals. Some of these fundamentals refer to the issues themselves, and some of these fundamentals refer to the methodology and way.

That which refers to the methodology and way includes their uniting between the rational faculties and the Divine texts and their careful deliberation so as not to declare as unequivocal things that are not—rational or textual. They did not claim that some Divine texts are explicit in meaning and unequivocal [in indication] when they were not, as the Twelver Shi'a did in their claim of an explicit text identifying the Imam, going to such extremes that they declared it a fundamental of the religion; or as the anthropomorphists and Karrāmiyya did in clinging to the outward meanings of texts, giving Allah a resemblance to the creation, all the while considering that they are doing something good.

Ahl al-Sunna did not claim that some rational points are unequivocal and foundational when they are not, as the Mu'tazila did when they held fast to sensory phenomena, claiming that man creates his own deeds and that his deeds are from the genus of Allah's actions insofar as it is conceivable that there is mutual resistance between the two; and when they said that intrinsic good and evil are affirmed and that Allah's actions follow that—



which compelled them to negate Allah's Divine will and consider it one of His actions and not an attribute; and when they uttered their incoherent statement that the one who commits an enormity is in "a position between two positions" [*manzila bayn manzilatayn*]; and when many of them claimed that the Ḥadīth reports speaking of the major sinners eventually exiting Hellfire are all spurious interpolations taken from the Israelite traditions! It is noteworthy to mention that they were helped in that by the Twelver Shi'a and the Ibādiyya.

Ahl al-Sunna have turned away from misguidance and error on both sides. This is why you will not find a single fundamental that they rely upon that goes against something unequivocal and clear-cut—be it rational or textual. Similarly, you will not find them declaring anything unequivocal that is not taken as unequivocal in the Sacred Law and the rational faculties. For this reason, they are the most just of the groups and the closest of them to the truth and what is correct.

That which refers to the issues themselves include: Ahl al-Sunna's distinction by holding fast to the clear truth and obvious and luminous facts. One of their most noble fundamentals is their belief that Allah does as He wills; His actions are not done as obligations or anything else that contradicts free-will. This distinguishes Ahl al-Sunna from the philosophers who claimed that actions are intrinsically obligatory upon Allah, and from the Mu'tazila (and those who followed them from the Twelver Shi'a) who claimed that Allah is obliged to act and that His actions must be in accordance with what is best or what is in the best interests that are affirmed in the self-same reality. This also distinguishes Ahl al-Sunna from the Zaydī Shi'a and others who were influenced by the two aforementioned sects.

Ahl al-Sunna are also explicitly clear in their declaration of Allah's Divine transcendence in His Entity, His attributes, and His actions. They opposed the anthropomorphists who believed that Allah's Entity resembles the creation, and as a consequence, affirmed for Him a limit and a direction, and asserted that contingent events subsists within His Entity—both in actions and attributes. Ahl al-Sunna negated all of that just as they negated

compositeness from Allah's Entity, Exalted is He, contrary to the anthropomorphists who affirmed physical limbs and called them concrete attributes (in contrast to qualitative attributes).

Ahl al-Sunna opposed the Mu'tazila in the latter's belief regarding Allah's actions and attributes. The Mu'tazila affirmed that the servant creates his own actions by his power, and that the effect of the servant's power is from the same type of effect found in Allah's power. Ahl al-Sunna opposed them in this because Allah's actions are a creation from nothingness, whereas the actions of man are an acquisition of what Allah has created, by the power that Allah created within them.

Ahl al-Sunna do not say that man is compelled, and at the same time they do not declare as equal Allah's action—which is creation from nothingness—and man's action—which is an acquisition of something. Man's actions subsist within himself, whereas Allah's actions do not subsist within His Entity, i.e. the locus of the servant's action is within himself, but the locus of Allah's action is not within His Entity. In addition, the servant's actions increase him in either perfection or imperfection but Allah does not gain additional perfection through His actions—contrary to the position claimed by the anthropomorphists and followers of Ibn Taymiyya. This is a tremendous fundamental that refers back to Allah's exalted transcendence in His attributes and actions.

Furthermore, Ahl al-Sunna opposed those who claimed that quiddities are affirmed in the self-same reality and that Allah does nothing but acquire them by bringing them into being or choosing not to bring them into being. They objected to the philosophers who claimed that the world, after coming into existence, subsists by itself, i.e. that it is self-subsistent and independent, without needing Allah's continued creation and sustenance of it in order to remain. These philosophers claimed that the continued existence of the world is not an action of Allah ﷻ.

Ahl al-Sunna objected to those who claimed that there is a conferred and intrinsic active power created by Allah, and affirmed instead that everything at every time is in perpetual and constant need of Allah's support for its continued existence, which is linked to His omnipotence and in accordance with His

Divine will and knowledge. Consequently, Ahl al-Sunna did not maintain that there is any act obligatory upon Allah; they did not believe that Allah is obliged to carry out any action, such as sending Messengers. They said that sending Messengers is from Allah's pure largesse and that had He willed to not send any Messengers to mankind, it would not detract from His godhood, Glorified is He.

Ahl al-Sunna also opposed the Mu'tazila who declared that Allah is obliged to punish or bestow reward. This particular belief of theirs is derived from [their view regarding] "intrinsic good and evil that is dictated by the intellect" [*al-tahsīn wal-taqbīh al-'aqliyyayn*] and their belief that Allah's actions are in accordance with the self-same realities that are affirmed with the affirmation of Allah ﷻ.

This is why we say that those, like the anthropomorphists, who give resemblance to Allah's Entity, usually believe that His attributes and actions resemble the creation. As for the Mu'tazila, they did not believe that Allah's Entity resembled [the creation]; rather, they believed that His attributes resembled [the creation] and subsequently negated them, and they believed that His actions resembled [the creation], and subsequently affirmed obligation, what is best and what is of best interest, the creation of actions, and the resemblance between man's actions and Allah's actions by genus. For this reason, they are corporealists with regards to actions, just as the anthropomorphists are corporealists with regards to Allah's Entity and attributes; they affirm them as they are witnessed in the sensory-world and they draw a distinction between them and the creation by shape and image [only].

These are some important fundamentals by which Ahl al-Sunna are distinguished from the other sects. I mentioned them here before commenting on the essay in order that they serve a framework of sorts, so the eager reader is able call them to mind while attempting to understand the other issues being mentioned.

Imam al-Ash'arī and Imam Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī are the two who verified these fundamentals and invalidated the principles of the opponents. They openly announced their debates and efforts to establish the truth within these



tremendous fundamentals. They hastened to impart these important matters to their pupils and followers in order to pave the way for spreading books that would establish the truth and invalidate deviancy across the horizon. After providing their students with a solid intellectual foundation—not poetic or oratory foundation—they dispatched them. We spoke about this in more detail in our book *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, and what we mentioned there regarding Imam al-Ash'arī applies equally to Imam al-Māturidī.

When the scholars of the Umma saw their distinguished efforts in establishing and spreading the fundamentals of the religion, they attested to their mighty efforts and admitted their virtue; they agreed with them in their explanations after having verified them for themselves; they placed them in their true rank, and consequently, most of them ascribed themselves to Imam al-Ash'arī and al-Māturidī, because both of them became signposts for the correct fundamentals of the religion. This is how they became Imams of Ahl al-Sunna.

We do not claim infallibility for anyone besides the Prophet ﷺ, and we do not claim perfection for anyone among the creation no matter what status they reach in the sciences. For this reason, we do not maintain that the individual opinions of some scholars of the Sunna in which they differed from the rest of their brothers are the truth and that the other views are misguidance and disbelief. Rather, their disagreements are usually based upon probabilities, and considering them as such, we are allowed to declare some of them correct in those matters, and that does not entail that others are accused of misguidance or that we disavow them. How could it be correct to disavow the scholars of guidance and the notable people of truth?

Differences between the theologians do exist. Usually these differences are found in their researches—even if only from some angles—and especially in the obscure and detailed aspects of this noble science. The reason for these differences is sometimes because of a different viewpoint, and sometimes it is because of giving attention to particular meanings or concepts and applying a ruling to them, to the exclusion of other meanings that, if noticed, would lead to a different judgment. Sometimes [two opposing viewpoints] are in the same realm, but that which

conveys them is different, thus the resultant rulings differ between the two because of the difference between them and their respective abilities and aptitudes in structuring their premises.

These differences could be in fundamental issues, such as those we mentioned earlier, or they could be in other things. Now, these differences can either be real differences in meaning in those exact issues and viewpoints or not. We shall soon see that this type of disagreement between the scholars of Ahl al-Sunna is very limited, and it will become plain to the reader how the universal fundamentals are not differed over between the two Imams of Ahl al-Sunna.

Conversely, these differences can also be semantic, in which the disagreement is only in the expression used, while there is agreement in the actual ruling and meaning.

In sum, this is what we have: the disagreement is either in meaning or it is semantic. The disagreement in meaning is either in something that is fundamental or it is in something that is subsidiary and secondary. There is no disagreement between Ahl al-Sunna in the fundamentals, and that is not appropriate. As for semantic differences in secondary issues, there are disagreements; however, that is inconsequential as we shall soon demonstrate. So in summary, there are semantic differences but they are of no consequence.

Imam Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī is well-known as a Ḥanafī. He had many books on doctrine that were written in the manner of the theologians, such as his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, which is extremely valuable, and *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*, which is a noble Qur'anic exegesis. From this the reader can recognize the rank of Imam al-Māturīdī and his position among the early Imams of Ahl al-Sunna in knowledge.

With regards to Imam al-Ash'arī, some scholars say that he was a Shāfi'ī in jurisprudence, while others say that he was a Mālikī—and these two positions are well-known. Others say that he was an independent *mujtahid* who was well-acquainted with the intricacies of these two aforementioned juridical schools. Some even say that al-Ash'arī was a Ḥanafī because [his uncle] Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī was a Ḥanafī, and it was unknown for any of the



Mu'tazila to be Shāfi'īs, save Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār who embraced the Shāfi'ī school after consultation with his Shaykh. So, it is plausible that al-Ash'arī was in fact a Ḥanafī as well.

Some scholars have mentioned al-Ash'arī in the ranks [*tabaqāt*] of Ḥanafī scholars, although this is farfetched, for the Shāfi'īs and Mālikīs also mention him in their ranks, not to mention that the well-known view is that he was a Shāfi'ī or Mālikī. Regardless of what his actual juridical school was, all of this is a proof that the scholars vied in claiming him for themselves; each juridical school wished to include him in their ranks, and this is a tremendous pride.

It is necessary to mention here that the decision of the scholars to follow Imam al-Ash'arī and Imam al-Māturīdī was not arbitrary and without reasons and justifications. It was a result of those two Imams rightfully deserving that high and lofty position. The other scholars attested to their right to that position; it was not taken by force, given arbitrarily, or seized by collusion as some foolish people imagine.

It is worthwhile to mention that Imam al-Ash'arī was known as an adherent to the doctrine of the Mu'tazila, and his teacher, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī was one of the senior Mu'tazila. Al-Ash'arī remained with them until reaching forty years of age, having reached a high level within their ranks to the point where Abū 'Alī would have him take his place in debates with opponents. Al-Ash'arī reached the highest peak of knowledge regarding the intricate details of the Mu'tazila doctrine and methodology.

Al-Ash'arī went through an extended period of time in which he reassessed many of the issues within the Mu'tazila doctrine and argued unceasingly with the Mu'tazila Shaykhs. This went on until they were unable to respond to many of his counterarguments. At this juncture, al-Ash'arī withdrew from the people and spent his time investigating the various doctrines and beliefs, until he reached the conclusion that the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna was the most sound, and he saw the noble Prophet ﷺ [in a dream] and as a glad tidings for him and giving his heart rest with his decision. At that point, he ventured out to the people and announced his separation from the Mu'tazila, and



he began to expend great efforts in emphasizing the doctrine of Ahl al-Sunna and supporting it with proofs and refuting its opponents.

Some foolish people believe that his retraction of the Mu'tazila doctrine was immediate and sudden, or that it came after seeing the Prophet ﷺ, and that it was without any of the conventional precursors that we mentioned. The facts point to the opposite of this, as do the narrations and conventional human behaviour.

Some naïve people who claim independent investigation and scholarly effort criticize al-Ash'ari for leaving the doctrine of the Mu'tazila and debating his Shaykh after that. They claim that such behaviour was a betrayal of them! This odious view proves the sickness in the hearts of those who believe it. By Allah, was it betrayal for him to stick to what he believed was correct, or should he have dealt hypocritically with his Shaykh and shown him that he supported them when in fact he opposed them? Moreover, how could it have been considered betrayal when it was known that he argued with them even while he was still ascribed to them?

Regardless, since they were unable to respond to his counter arguments that he directed against the Mu'tazila doctrine, he openly announced and warned them, proving his openness and his embrace of the doctrine of truth. Can that sort of behaviour be called betrayal? Anyone who dares describe his position as a betrayal is nothing more than a foolish and naïve dolt whose heart is heedless and who has vile ulterior motives.

As for Imam al-Māturidī, it is not known that he was ever from the Mu'tazila. Some scholars consider this a proof for the purity of his doctrine and the absence of Mu'tazila doctrine and mistakes from it. That alone, however, is not a proof for what they claim, even though we say that he did not agree with the Mu'tazila in that which is from their fundamentals that distinguish them from the people of truth—and all praise is due to Allah ﷻ.

## CHAPTER I

### THE ATTRIBUTE OF CREATION [TAKWĪN]

After having mentioned these necessary preliminary remarks that we hope prove beneficial, we begin with clarifying the issues, with Allah's help. The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

ولا نزاع بين الشيخين واتباعهما في الأصول إلا في اثنتي عشرة مسألة:  
الأولى: قال الماتريدي: التكوين صفة أزلية قائمة بذات الله تعالى كجميع صفاته، وهو غير المكوّن، ويتعلق بالمكوّن من العالم وكل جزء منه وقت وجوده، كما أنّ إرادة الله أزلية تتعلق بالمرادات بوقت وجودها وكذا قدرته تعالى الأزلية مع مقدوراتها.  
وقال الأشعري: إنها صفة حادثة غير قائمة بذات الله تعالى، وهي من الصفات الفعلية عنده لا من الصفات الأزلية. والصفات الفعلية كلها حادثة كالتكوين والإيجاد ويتعلق وجود العالم بخطاب كُنْ.

There is no contention between the two Shaykhs and their followers in the fundamentals except in twelve issues.

**One:** Al-Māturīdī said that *takwīn* is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah's Entity, as do all of His attributes, and that it is distinct from that which is brought into existence [*mukawwan*], and that it is linked with that which is brought into existence in the world and every part of it [the world] from the time of its inception. Just as Allah's will is eternal and linked with that which is willed at the time of its existence, so too is His eternal omnipotence with that which is decreed.

Al-Ash'arī said that it is a contingent attribute that does not subsist with Allah's Entity, and that according to him it is from the attributes of action and not from the eternal attributes. As he saw it, the attributes of action are all contingent, such as *takwīn* and bringing into existence and the emergence of the world with the statement (be).

The issues that pertain to the religion are divided, by some scholars, into two categories: fundamentals [*uṣūl*] and branches [*furū*]. They use the word "fundamentals" to describe the science of Divine Oneness (and some include the science of legal theory [*uṣūl al-fiqh*] along with it), and they use the word "branches" to describe jurisprudence and similar subjects. Other scholars divide the content of the science of Divine Oneness into fundamentals and branches, too. By fundamentals, they mean the matters upon which doctrine is based, and by branches, they mean everything else. They have multiple ways to distinguish between the two.

By the word "fundamentals," the author could have intended the former or the latter meaning. According to meaning of the former, the author's statement would mean that these two Imams did not differ in the science of Divine Oneness except in the issues that he mentioned. According to the meaning of the latter, the author's statement would mean that they differed in the fundamentals of the science of Divine Oneness, as found in the issues he enumerated—and the distinction between these two meanings is clear.

If these issues were from the fundamentals of Divine Oneness, it would imply that they differed with each other in the fundamentals of the science of Divine Oneness as found in these issues, undoubtedly leading to them splitting into two separate groups. Therefore, if the disagreement was in the fundamentals of Divine Oneness they would be two groups and not one, because a single group must agree in the fundamentals of the science of Divine Oneness.

If, however, the former meaning is not correct, it does not imply that these issues are from the fundamentals of Divine Oneness. Rather, they are branch issues in which there is no harm in having differences and which does not necessitate them splitting into two separate factions. Rather, they are two paths within one way.

As far as we see it, and as we shall soon explain, this is the intended meaning by which the author's words must be understood. It is not hidden to the well-acquainted reader that the scholars have mentioned more issues of disagreement than these. It seems, however, that the author sought to limit mention of them to these due to their obvious nature.<sup>1</sup>

There is another possible understanding of the terms "fundamentals" and "branches" that might come to the mind, namely, that issues are divided into clear issues [*jali*] and obscure [*daqīq*] issues, and it could be that the word "fundamentals" is used to refer to the clear issues, excluding the obscure ones, and that the author sufficed with mentioning the disagreements between them in the clear issues of theology.

### On the issue of *Takwīn*

The summary view of Imam al-Māturīdī on this issue was explained by the author: Allah ﷻ is described with three attributes: Power, Will, and *takwīn*; each of these attributes has a linkage [*ta'alluq*] with contingent possibilities. Will possesses a pre-eternal linkage with that which is willed: namely, the specification of what is willed with the time of its existence. In addition, Power possesses a pre-eternal linkage with that which is decreed. According to Imam al-Māturīdī, the reality of the linkage of Power is not [the act of] bringing into existence and non-existence, for if that were the case, it would not be pre-eternal. Rather, according to him, its linkage with that which is decreed means that it is valid for these decreed things to be made—in other words, that Allah is All-Powerful means that it is valid for Him to create these contingent beings from nothingness, and that which makes this ruling valid and affirmed for Allah ﷻ is the attribute of Power or Him being described with power.

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<sup>1</sup> For are more in depth mention of the areas of difference between the Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs, see *Ishārāt al-Marām min 'Ibārāt al-Imām*, p. 53-56, by the erudite scholar Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Bayyāḍī with the foreword of Imam Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī and verification by Ustādh Yūsuf 'Abd al-Razzāq.



As for *takwīn*, it is a qualitative attribute like Power and Will, and it has a linkage with that which Allah brings into being (that which He brings into existence). This linkage cannot be but contingent at the time in which the existents are brought into being and created.

From this you can gather that *takwīn* is a beginningless attribute that subsists with Allah and that has a linkage of contingent effectiveness [*tanjīzī ḥādīth*] with that which is brought into existence at the time of its creation. For this reason, the scholars say: "*Takwīn* is other than that which is brought into existence [*mukawwan*]," because *takwīn* is a pre-eternal attribute and that which is brought into existence is contingent and created.

Based upon that, the statement of the crass literalists is incorrect, that because they [the Māturīdīs] believe in the attribute of *takwīn* that subsists with Allah's Entity, and it is an action of Allah and that Allah's actions are emergent [*ḥādīth*], that the Māturīdīs agree with them in their belief that contingents subsist in Allah's Entity. This claim is based upon an obvious fallacy. According to the Māturīdīs, *takwīn* is a pre-eternal attribute and it is not contingent, and it cannot be said that it is an action in an unrestricted sense. Rather, it is an attribute from which actions come forth. There is a vast difference between the belief of the Māturīdīs and *hashawī* anthropomorphists. When they say that *takwīn* is an attribute of action, they mean to say that it is an attribute from which the action comes forth, and the action does not indwell or subsist in Allah's Entity. Nay; according to them it is a pre-eternal attribute that subsists with Allah's Exalted Entity. As for the crass literalists and followers of Ibn Taymiyya, they say that *takwīn* or *khāliqīyya* is an attribute of action, i.e. a contingent act, and that it subsists with Allah ﷻ. So according to them, insofar as it is contingent and a result of Will it is an action, and insofar as it subsists with Allah's Entity it is His attribute. The conclusion of their belief in attributes of action is that they are contingent acts belonging to Allah and [that they are] His attributes. This belief describes His actions as existing contingent attributes that subsist with Him. Undoubtedly this belief is rejected by the Ḥanafīs.

The summary view of Imam al-Ash'arī on this issue was explained by the author. According to al-Ash'arī, Allah is described with a beginningless Will that has linkages, just as al-Māturīdī said. Hence, there is no difference between the two regarding the attribute of Will. According to al-Ash'arī, Power is also a beginningless attribute—and to this point there is no disagreement with al-Māturīdī. Here, however, al-Ash'arī said that Power has two linkages: [one] pre-eternal potentiality [*ṣulūhī qadīm*], which implies the validity of the ruling that Allah can create and bring into being all of creation from nothing, and [two] contingent effectiveness [*tanjīzī ḥādith*] that is linked to the thing created at the time of its emergence. So, bringing something into existence and bringing something into non-existence are from the rulings of Power according to Imam al-Ash'arī, whereas they are from the rulings of *takwīn* according to al-Māturīdī.

What then is *takwīn* according to al-Ash'arī? To explain that, we say: if the effect of the effective linkage of Power to that which is decreed is a general existence, then that linkage is called *takwīn*; if the effect of that linkage is provision, then that linkage is called *tarzīq* (being provided for); if the effect of that linkage is the existence of life, then that linkage is called *ihyā'* (being brought to life); and if the effect of that linkage is the bringing of death, then that linkage is called *imāta* (being caused to die).

Therefore, according to al-Ash'arī, *takwīn* is a description of the effective linkage of Power when taking notice of its effect. According to al-Māturīdī, it is the self-same beginningless attribute from which things are created and brought into being. For that reason, *takwīn* is seen as a contingent description of Allah and not an existing thing that subsists with Allah ﷻ. Nay, according to him, it is a relative ascription between the creation and Allah ﷻ insofar as He is the Creator, and for that reason, al-Ash'arī believed that *takwīn* is from the attributes of actions, nay, from the descriptions of actions. According to al-Ash'arī, Allah's actions are the effective linkages between Power and what is decreed. Furthermore, those linkages are described as being *takwīn*, being given provision, being brought to life, being caused to die, vengeance, and so on; all according to the appropriate effect.



All of Allah's actions are contingent and He does not possess a pre-eternal action because it is impossible for an action to be pre-eternal; Allah's actions are not His attributes; however, names and descriptions for Him can be derived from them. At this juncture, we must point out the difference between an attribute [*ṣifa*] and a description [*waṣf*]. As a technical term, the word "attribute" indicates a meaning that subsists with Allah ﷻ such as Power and Knowledge. The term "description" indicates the actual expression used for Allah ﷻ such as: the All-Powerful, the Creator, the Provider, and so on.

Some scholars use the word "attribute" intending by it the word "description." The word description can be applied by taking notice of the subsistence of the attribute in the entity or its affirmation for it, or by the linkage of the attribute to that with which it is linked, be it an action or other than that.

The default rule is that the affirmation of an attribute is conditional upon an unequivocal textual or rational proof. When it comes to the usage of descriptions, however, the scholars disagree. Al-Ash'arī said that just like the Divine names, it is not sound without a textual proof. Others said that it is sound even if there is not textual proof, provided that the description does not suggest imperfection for Allah ﷻ. Al-Ghazālī went into detail regarding this issue and concluded that the Divine names are restricted to that which is located in the texts, while at the same time permitting the use of descriptions that are not found in revelation, provided that the aforementioned condition is met. Whoever fails to distinguish between the terms attribute and description and the rulings that apply to each, will become confused.

Some scholars have quoted al-Ash'arī as saying that the existence of the universe is linked with the address of ﴿be﴾. If he meant that the existence of the universe is an effect of the linkage of Divine Speech, which is ﴿be﴾, that is incorrect because the universe is an effect of the linkage of Power. What is correct is that Divine Speech, as such, *indicates* all that is known to Allah ﷻ. And among the objects of Divine Knowledge is the existence of the universe, which is indicated in the address of ﴿be﴾. To say that the address was directed towards the universe to come into existence is inconceivable because it is impossible for something

that is effectively non-existent to be commanded. Furthermore, "coming into existence" is not something with which a thing can be tasked and made responsible for, because the address is pre-eternal and the universe is contingent and its linkage is effective, and so on. And Allah ﷻ knows best.

### Notice

This disagreement is not fundamental in nature. The basic rule is to declare Allah exalted and transcendent beyond imperfections in His power, and both al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī agreed upon that. The exact disagreement was with regards to the pre-eternal potential linkage [*ṣulūhī qadīm*] and the contingently effective linkage [*tanjīzī ḥādīth*]: do both of them refer back to one attribute, namely that of Power—as al-Ash'arī said—or are they two attributes, the former being Power, referred to here as the pre-eternal potentiality, and the latter being *takwīn*, referred to here as contingent effectiveness?

It seems apparent that the disagreement here is not fundamental in nature. Both were in agreement regarding the affirmation of these two types of linkages. Had one [of them] said that is it not possible for Allah to create some contingent beings, that would have been a fundamental difference; and if one of them said that Allah did not actually create some of the contingent beings, and the other said He did, that would have been a fundamental difference. However, the reality of the disagreement between the two Imams is not like that at all.

The only real disagreement here lies in the question: does Allah possess an attribute that is additional to Power and called *takwīn* or not? It is known that the fundamental on which both of them agree is that it is permissible for it to be affirmed among Allah's perfections, even though we do not know of its affirmation. Therefore, affirming an attribute that is additional to Power does not contradict this fundamental, which would not be the case had one affirmed an attribute that implied likeness, such as a limb or a limit. Had that occurred, the disagreement would have been fundamental in nature. From this, we see that the disagreement between the two Imams was not fundamental.

## CHAPTER II

### ON HEARING THE SPEECH OF ALLAH

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الثانية: قال الماتريدي: كلام الله تعالى ليس بمسموع، وإنما المسموع الدالُّ عليه.

وقال الأشعري: مسموعٌ كما هو المشهور من حكاية موسى.

قال ابن فورك: المسموع عند قراءة القارئ شيئان: صوت القارئ وكلام الله تعالى.

وقال القاضي الباقلاني: كلام الله غير مسموع على العادة الجارية، ولكن يجوز أن يُسمع الله تعالى مَنْ شاء مِنْ خلقه على خلاف قياس العادة من غير واسطة الحروف والصوت.

وقال أبو إسحاق الإسفراييني وَمَنْ تبعه: إِنَّ كلام الله تعالى غير مسموع أصلاً، وهو اختيار الشيخ أبي منصور الماتريدي، كذا في البداية.

**Two:** Al-Māturīdī said that the speech of Allah, the Exalted, is not heard; rather, what is heard is that which points to it. Al-Ash'arī said that it is heard—as is well known in the story of Mūsā ﷺ. Ibn Fūrak said: "Two things are heard during the recitation of the reader: the voice of the reader, and the speech of Allah, the Exalted." Al-Qāḍī [Abu Bakr] al-Bāqillānī said: "Allah's speech is not heard in the conventional sense; rather, it is possible for Allah to allow any of His creation that He wills to hear [it], contrary to conventional means and [contrary to it being] with the medium of letters and sound." Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and those who follow him said: "Allah's speech is not heard at all." This was the view chosen by Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī—as found in *al-Bidāya*.

Imam al-Ash'arī was in agreement with Imam al-Māturīdī that Allah ﷻ is described with an attribute of self that is called Speech [*kalām*]. The disagreement about Divine Speech being heard or not does not pertain to the self-same speech; rather, it pertains to the ascription of something to it that is linked with the creation, i.e. the creation's hearing of it or lack thereof.

As far as I see it, this disagreement is largely semantic, as we shall explain here, Allah willing.

Imam al-Māturīdī did not use the word "heard" [*masmū'*] except for that which is attached to the sense of hearing—which is the sense organ that humans are described with. As he saw it, linked to this sense organ are sounds that indicate a pre-eternal attribute. According to both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī, the actual pre-eternal attribute does not make contact with the sense organ or vice versa. Hence, both of them negated the Creator being connected with the creation—and this is a fundamental tenet. Furthermore, both of them negated the connection of the pre-eternal attribute with the creation or its indwelling within it—and this is another fundamental tenet. Hence there was no disagreement between them in this issue.

The disagreement between them is whether or not the beginningless attribute is heard. Al-Māturīdī stipulated that there be a connection with the sense organ for something to be termed "heard," and for that reason he did not believe that the Inner Speech [*al-kalām al-naḥsī*] could be heard; rather, he believed that what is heard is that which indicates this Speech.

Imam al-Ash'arī did not stipulate that there be a connection with the sense organ for something to be termed "heard." He believed that it is valid to call it "heard" and to say that the speech is heard if it is perceived in any way in the sense organ, and indicates the beginningless attribute, even if it is by Allah's direct creation without precursors or conventional means

This demonstrates that the disagreement between them is semantic in nature and is not a real, substantial disagreement. They both agreed on the fundamentals: affirmation of the pre-eternal attribute and belief that it is not connected to the sense organs. The only disagreement is regarding the term "heard" and whether its use is stipulated by the connection of what is heard—as Imam al-Māturīdī posited—or if it is sufficient to perceive that



which indicates what is heard, whether that takes place by connection and conventional means, or through direct creation by Allah ﷻ—as Imam al-Ash'arī posited. So, as you can see, this disagreement is not in the fundamentals.

According to Imam al-Ash'arī, hearing Allah's speech means that Allah creates perception in the sense organ [the ear], or He creates a perception within the soul that is akin to what He customarily creates in the sense organ [the ear]. This perception indicates Allah's speech and it is not pre-conditioned by a preceding creation through conventional means, such as sounds and other things.

According to Imam al-Māturīdī, hearing is the connection of a sound—for example—to the sense organ and this sound indicates the pre-eternal Speech.

Based on the explanation of Imam al-Ash'arī, Allah's speech is heard. This is why Ibn Fūrak said: "Two things are heard during the recitation of the reader: the voice of the reader, and the speech of Allah, the Exalted." That is the same meaning of al-Bāqillānī's words:

Allah's speech is not heard in the conventional sense; rather, it is possible for Allah to allow any of His creation that He wills to hear [it] contrary to conventional means and [contrary to it being] with the medium of letters and sound.

That is based on the fundamental that we explained here and the distinction that we pointed out and it is based on the statement of al-Ash'arī and not his exact statement.

Al-Bāqillānī's statement means that Allah's speech is heard; however, it is not heard through the conventional means that he mentioned. As for Abū Ishāq's statement, it goes back to al-Māturīdī's view as we explained. We see here that the statements of the others refer back to the view of either al-Māturīdī or al-Ash'arī. See to it that you understand the issue in this manner, for then you will know the reality of the disagreement and its source. You are not likely to find this analysis in any other book. This is only the bounty, Divine success, and favour of Allah ﷻ.

### CHAPTER III

#### ON THE ATTRIBUTE OF WISDOM

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الثالثة: قال الماتريدي: صانعُ العالم موصوفٌ بالحكمة سواءً كانت  
الحكمة، بمعنى العلم أو بمعنى الإحكام.  
وقال الأشعري: إن كانت الحكمة بمعنى العلم فهي صفة أزلية قائمة بذات الله  
تعالى، وإن كانت بمعنى الإحكام فهي صفة حادثَةٌ من قبيل التكوين، لا يوصف  
ذات الباري بها.

**Three:** Al-Māturīdī said that the Creator of the universe is described with wisdom [*ḥikma*], whether that wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge [*ʿilm*] or the meaning of perfect mastery [*ihkām*]. Al-Ashʿarī said that if wisdom takes the meaning of knowledge, then it is an eternal attribute that subsists with Allah's Entity, exalted is He, and if it takes the meaning of perfect mastery then it is a contingent quality akin to *takwīn*, and the Entity of the Creator is not described with it.

According to its common linguistic usage, wisdom it to place something in its most fitting and appropriate place. It is also used to describe the one who knows what is appropriate and is aware of what is rationally, legally, and empirically necessary, possible, and impossible. The one who is described with that is called wise, or it is said that he possesses wisdom, even if no effective action is done by him.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Allah is All-Wise [*Ḥakīm*]; and there is no doubt that wisdom is related to knowledge from one angle and to perfectly precise action from another; for this reason, there are many statements from the scholars expressing these meanings.



Imam al-Māturīdī said that Allah ﷻ is described with wisdom and that it is a description of Allah's Entity, and that it refers to either knowledge of the perfected actions, or the pre-eternal attribute of *takwīn* that he affirmed. So in other words, according to al-Māturīdī, perfection and mastery of actions are implications of *takwīn*, and since *takwīn* is pre-eternal, and that which is implied is inseparable from that which implies it, the description of wisdom is [also] pre-eternal.

Now, you should not assume that this implicitly includes the belief that Allah has been unceasingly acting and creating by creating one thing after another from beginningless eternity. This is not the case. Imam al-Māturīdī did not believe in the eternity of the world specifically or generically. Al-Māturīdī's belief was based on the position that Allah is described with *takwīn* that is beginninglessly linked with all contingent beings. Based on that, he said that Allah is All-Wise, just as he said that Allah is the Creator and Provider from beginningless eternity.

Imam al-Ghazālī pointed out that the one who does not know Allah ﷻ is not worthy to be called wise [*ḥakīm*], and that whoever does know Him is wise, even if he ignorant of all other outward and conventional modes of knowledge. And if one knows Allah, his discourse is different from that of others and seldom does he concern himself with particulars; rather, he speaks of matters that are universal in scope. Nor does he concern himself with passing benefits; rather, he will concern himself with that which will benefit in the world to come [i.e. the Hereafter]. Because this is more evident to people than the state of the wise sage, they apply the term 'wisdom' to universal statements and call the one who utters them wise.<sup>2</sup>

I know of no recorded statement that would justify saying that Imam al-Māturīdī believed in an attribute called Wisdom that is additional to Knowledge, Power, and *takwīn*.<sup>3</sup> When he described

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Maḡṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, Imam al-Ghazālī, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Mustajā Zādeh (d. 1150 H.) said in *al-Masālik fī al-Khilāfiyāt bayn al-Mutakallimīn wal-Hukamā'*, p. 159: "Wisdom is that which has a praiseworthy end result and foolishness is its opposite." I say: There is a difference regarding the reality of wisdom and its converse (foolishness). There are three groups: the Ash'arīs, the Māturīdīs, and the Mu'tazila. According to the first group, it [wisdom] is that which

Allah with wisdom, based on the belief that the perfected actions are linked to *takwīn*, it was as if he was saying: "This description is pre-eternal and valid for Allah, the Exalted, even before the actual creation of the world, because the attribute of *takwīn* is also beginninglessly eternal."

Imam al-Ash'arī, on the other hand, did not affirm an additional attribute called wisdom. He posited that the description called wisdom either refers to knowledge—as Imam al-Māturīdī held—or to perfect mastery, i.e. the mastery and perfection of actions, in which case it is an expression denoting the contingent linkages affected by perfected actions<sup>4</sup>—and these linkages are linkages of Power.

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occurs with the intention of the doer, and foolishness is its contrary. According to the second group, it is [what Mustajā Zādeh said above]. According to the third group, it is that which contains benefit for the doer or someone else, and foolishness it is contrary."

<sup>4</sup> It is said in Imam Ibn Fūrak's *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī*, p. 48: "As for the meaning of His description that He is All-Wise, it is two-sided: the first one refers to the fact that it is etymologically derived from wisdom [*ḥikma*], and the second one is that it means one who is of perfection and mastery [*muḥkim*]. He [al-Ash'arī] would say that wisdom means knowledge and that He [Allah] has never ceased being All-Wise in the sense that He has never ceased being All-Knowing. On the other hand, if it is with the meaning of one who is of perfection and mastery, it refers to a type of derivation from the verb.

Imam al-Ghazālī said: "Wisdom is the knowledge of superior things through the highest modes of knowing." He also explained that the most superior knowledge is knowledge of Allah ﷻ. Perhaps he was referring to his statement found in the *Book of Reliance* within his *Iḥyā'*: "There is no possibility of anything more perfect than what already exists." If he meant that all of that is by Allah's will, then he is not impugned with the belief in extreme fatalism [*jabr*] or the belief that things are intrinsically obligatory upon Allah [*ijāb*]. Having said that, there are still some problems with his words. Its outward meaning seems to negate Allah's ability to create a world even more perfect than this sensory world. This belief then negates that Paradise is better than this world. Nevertheless, the scholars have disagreed over the interpretation of his words and they have written many essays on it without seemingly agreeing on a common stance. It would seem that there is a need for a complete research to be dedicated to this subject.

Based on that, wisdom is from the attributes of actions and it does not refer to the actual Divine Entity or a pre-eternal attribute. Rather, it is a description of the contingent linkages of pre-eternal Power that subsists with the Divine Entity. The descriptions of action are not attributes of Allah ﷻ which means that they are not attributes that subsist in Allah's Entity—as is well-known. Wisdom is considered an attribute of actions, describing them as perfected and precise, and that is not a qualitative meaning that subsists with Allah; rather, it subsists with the actions, even if they come from Allah in the sense that He is All-Powerful and All-Knowing.

The fact that wisdom is a description of the actions does not prevent us from deriving a name or description for Allah ﷻ. It is permissible to derive names and descriptions by taking notice of His actions, and this is found in the Sacred Law.

From all this, and because it is related to the issue of *takwīn*, we know that this disagreement is not fundamental in nature. It is true that the disagreement is real [as opposed to being merely semantic]; however, it is not a fundamental disagreement because both parties affirm that Allah is Perfect in His actions and that He is All-Knowing regarding them. Neither party believes that His actions are necessary for Him. Rather, they believe that they are created by His choice, Exalted is He.

One can possibly conclude—from one angle at least—that this disagreement is semantic, considering that according to al-Ash'arī the use of a derived name for Allah in pre-eternity is figurative [*majāz*], because Allah is All-Powerful and ever able to create with perfection and precision even if He doesn't create. If that is enough according to al-Ash'arī to derive the name All-Wise [Ḥakīm], then it is valid to use the name All-Wise for Allah as a linguistic reality in beginningless eternity.

According to al-Māturidī, using the name All-Wise is a linguistic reality in beginningless eternity without difference.



However, to consider perfect mastery [*ihkām*] as an necessary implication of *takwīn*—insomuch as the latter cannot be conceived otherwise and in the sense that if *takwīn* is affirmed in beginningless eternity, so must perfect mastery—is not exact and meticulous, for if perfect mastery was a necessary implication, it would have been impossible for Allah to create anything besides perfectly masterful actions.

Based on this explanation, we see that this disagreement is related to the disagreement regarding *takwīn*, as well as a linguistic disagreement that we pointed out.

## CHAPTER IV

### ON ALLAH'S PLEASURE WITH OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الرابعة: قال الماتريدي: إن الله تعالى يريد بجميع الكائنات جوهرًا أو عرضاً طاعة أو معصية، إلا أن الطاعة تقع بمشيئة الله تعالى وإرادته وقضائه وقدره ورضائه ومحبه وأمره، وأن المعصية تقع بمشيئة الله تعالى وإرادته وقضائه وقدره لا برضائه ومحبه وأمره.

وقال الأشعري: إن رضاء الله تعالى ومحبه شامل لجميع الكائنات كإرادته.

**Four:** Al-Māturīdī said that Allah wills obedience or disobedience for all things, be they essences or accidents; however, obedience occurs by Allah's will and decree, His pre-ordainment and predestination, and with His pleasure, love, and command, while disobedience occurs by Allah's will and decree and His predestination and pre-ordainment, but not with His pleasure, love, or command. Al-Ash'arī said that Allah's love and pleasure are inclusive of all things just as His will.

Al-Māturīdī was essentially saying that Allah's will is linked to all essences and accidents, and there is agreement between him and al-Ash'arī on this point. Al-Māturīdī went on to say that this linkage is valid whether the accidents were acts of obedience or acts of disobedience—in other words, whether it is given the ruling of being an act of obedience or disobedience. Al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī also agreed on this point.

The disagreement lies in what goes beyond that. Obedience occurs with Allah's will and He is pleased with it—as both of them agree—but as for disobedience, even though it is agreed that it occurs by Allah's will, al-Māturīdī posited that it is not with Allah's pleasure; rather, it is with His displeasure and prohibition.



As for Imam al-Ash'arī, the Ustādh [Pāshā] reported that he believed that Allah's love is inclusive of every accident, be it an act of obedience or an act of disobedience. This general statement suggests that Allah ﷻ loves disobedience. The correct view, however, is that this is not the doctrine of al-Ash'arī. On the contrary, he said that Allah loves disobedience inasmuch as He punishes on account of it, just as He loves obedience inasmuch as He rewards on account of it. There is a distinction between this and what Ustādh Ibn Kamāl Pāshā and others mentioned and ascribed to al-Ash'arī.

For that reason, had it been quoted from al-Ash'arī that he said that Allah loves all of the creation, that would not imply that He is pleased with everything, unless mentioned with the aforementioned restrictive clause. To shed more light on this, Imam Ibn Fūrak quoted Imam al-Ash'arī within his *Mujarrad al-Maqālāt*. He [al-Ash'arī] said:

As for Him being described as loving and well-pleased or displeased and having enmity, according to him all of that refers back to the Divine Will. He used to say that the good pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, towards the believers is His will to reward them and praise them and that His displeasure with the disbelievers is His will to punish them and blame them; and the same may be said regarding His love and enmity. Moreover, he used to say that His mercy refers back to His will and that when it [the Divine Will] is linked in a specific manner it is mercy and that if it is linked in a different way it is displeasure and enmity. The various linkages depend on the different states and things that are foreknown in Allah's knowledge and judgment of their acts. Everything else is explained in the same manner.

He [Ibn Fūrak] also said:

We already explained the primary meanings of love and loving-kindness [*ḥubb* and *wudd*] and that they refer to Divine Will: His willing of good for the one He knows to possess goodness—if we restrict that to the people of goodness. He [al-Ash'arī] did not distinguish between loving-kindness, love, will, volition, and good-pleasure. He

did not say that one of the above is specific to some of the things that are willed to the exclusion of the rest. Rather, he would say that each of them take the meaning of the other in the sense of restriction that removes all confusion; so Allah loves for the believer to be a believer from the people of goodness as He knows. Similarly, it is willed for the disbeliever to be a disbeliever as he is known from the people of evil; and it is loved for that one [the disbeliever] to be that as He knows. In addition, he would say the same thing regarding good-pleasure, and being chosen and selected. The wording of this should be qualified so as not to allow for any imagined error.

According to al-Ash'arī, when left unqualified, love is not equal to Will (in its meaning), nor is love a qualitative attribute that subsists in the Divine Entity like Will; rather, pleasure and displeasure are from the implications of the commands and prohibitions. That which Allah is pleased with is what He commands, and that which He is displeased with is what He prohibits.

According to him, love is Will when considering its specific linkage. This is similar to the relationship between the act of providing [*rāziqiyya*] and omnipotence or the act of creating [*khāliqiyya*].

Someone might retort: "Had love been intrinsically linked with Will, then—admitting the qualification you mentioned—everything that Allah loves would have taken place, and were we to concede that point, we would not be able to accept the implications of Allah punishing disobedient people or the implications of the position that it is impossible for one to be pardoned without repentance. As such, this contravenes the doctrine of the People of Truth. To clarify the implication: love [in being intrinsically linked with Will] is linked with disobedience inasmuch as disobedience is punished (meaning with the condition of it being punished)—so if love and pleasure were synonymous with Will, every act of disobedience would be punished and it would be impossible for an act of disobedience to go unpunished [as the converse, displeasure, would also be

synonymous with Will]. This is expressed as "the permissibility of pardon without repentance." It is known that al-Ash'arī did not hold this view."

In response to this we say: The only thing rejected in your words is the statement that "every act of disobedience would be punished and it would be impossible for an act of disobedience to go unpunished." This is not necessary, because we already believe that disobedience itself depends on Allah's will from beginning to end, hence it is not a given that all of it will occur or that all of it will not occur.

When understanding al-Ash'arī's view in this light, it becomes clear that his and al-Māturīdī's view are one and the same—or at most, the disagreement is semantic and is not fundamental in nature. This demonstrates the error of those who say that al-Ash'arī believed that love and pleasure are synonymous with will.

#### Notice

One can possibly assert—from one angle at least—that Ustādh Ibn Kamāl Pāshā's statement was correct. He said that just as the attribute of Will is linked with all things, love and pleasure are also linked with all things. From this angle it is possible to say that Allah created everything with His Will and was pleased with everything and what is to come of them, so obedience shall be rewarded and disobedience shall be punished; love is linked with obedience with the condition of reward.

This is almost the same as saying that it is linked with obedience and punishment, and in this sense, it is near to the linkages of Will. However, from the aforementioned explanation, we know the distinction between this and the linkages of Will. So this particular angle is still constrained and far from being correct; however, we mentioned it here due it possibly crossing the reader's mind. The linkage of Will to obedience, therefore, is not conditional upon the linkage of reward, contrary to pleasure, for that is conditional. Similarly, the linkage of Will to disobedience is not conditional upon the linkage of its punishment, contrary to that of love, for it is linked to disobedience with the condition that it is punished.

## CHAPTER V

### ON THAT IN WHICH THERE IS NO CAPACITY TO ENDURE

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الخامسة: تكليف ما لا يُطاق ليس بجائر عند الماتريدي، وتحميل ما لا  
يطاق عنده جائز.  
وكلاهما جائزان عند الأشعري.

**Five:** According to al-Māturīdī, being tasked [*taklif*] with that in which there is no capacity to endure is impermissible, whereas being burdened with that which cannot be borne is permissible. According to al-Ash'arī both are permissible.

There are numerous concepts that we must explain here before addressing this issue. The term *taklif* means to order that which entails burden or to request that which initially entails burden for the doer, in the sense that if he does it, he will be rewarded, and if he refrains, he will either be punished or blamed.

Some might say that *taklif* is the mere address directed to the one who is charged, and it is not conditional upon its objective being that it should be carried out; rather, it is sufficient if that person singles out his intention for it. So, based on the former explanation of *taklif*, it is inconceivable that it could be linked with either rational or conventional impossibilities, and based on the latter there is nothing to impede that.

That which is impossible is either empirically impossible, such as a man carrying a mountain, or it is rationally impossible, such as gathering between two contradictories or opposites. Now, it is not necessarily a condition that the expression “that in which there is no capacity to endure” [*mā lā yuṭāq*] means that which is impossible; it could in fact be possible, but it is outside of one's



ability and power. It could include that which is empirically impossible and that which is less. Some people can lift and carry an oil barrel and some people cannot; some people can sprint at a certain speed and some people cannot; and some people can bear hunger and thirst and others cannot.

Imam al-Māturīdī did not believe that one can be legally tasked with that in which there is no capacity to endure, because the objective of legal accountability is for the one held legally accountable to carry out the act, and not merely be addressed with it, or anything less than carrying out the act.

Imam al-Ash'arī, on the other hand, believed it is permissible for one to be legally tasked with that in which there is no capacity to endure, because he did not hold it conditional for *taklif* that its objective be the actual carrying out of the act. According to him, it could very well suffice that one directs his intention towards that act, assuming that he had ability [to carry out the act]. This is the source of the disagreement, which is why some of the verifying scholars said that it would not be farfetched to say that the disagreement is only in semantics, as the two issues are not regarding the same matter.

Imam al-Ash'arī inferred his belief from Allah's words: «Our Lord, burden us not with more than we can bear.»<sup>5</sup> According to al-Ash'arī, burdening is *taklif*; and were it not permissible that [one be] burdened with that which cannot be borne, it would not be valid to seek refuge from it.

According to al-Māturīdī, there is a difference between *taklif* [being tasked with an act] and being burdened [*taḥmīl*]; *taklif* is to seek an action or order it, resulting in either reward or punishment; being burdened is less insofar as it does not result in either reward or punishment. It is not considered *taklif* because it is permissible for someone to be burdened with carrying something that he is unable to carry, and dies as a result.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baqara: 286

<sup>6</sup> This is similar to the meaning pointed out by Abū 'Adhba in his book *al-Rawḍa al-Bahiyya fī mā bayn al-Ash'ā'ira wal-Māturīdiyya*. Mentioning the Māturīdī response to the Ash'arī deduction from the verse «burden us not with more than we can bear» he said on p. 129: «The response to this verse is that the seeking of refuge is from being burdened [*taḥmīl*] and not being tasked [*taklif*], for it is permissible for someone to be burdened

Some scholars say that al-Ash'arī did not explicitly state that it is permissible for someone to be ordered with that in which there is no capacity to endure, and that it was rather some of the latter-day scholars who inferred that from his words. However, I saw in the book *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-Ash'arī* by Ibn Fūrak the following:

And he [al-Ash'arī] mentioned in *al-Nawādir*, in the section on leaving off [actions], that if He [Allah] had ordered the gathering between two contraries, it would not be considered foolishness from Him, nor would it be considered impossible.

Explaining the doctrine of al-Ash'arī, Imam Ibn Fūrak also said:

He used to say that the command that the one who is ordered is unable carry out is of two categories: sometimes it is when the one ordered leaves that [what is commanded] and with his own choice and occupies himself with its opposite; sometimes it is due to his inability. As for the state in which the one ordered is unable due to his leaving [the action], it is not denied that the command to that which is ordered is connected to it, and based upon this the legal commands have been revealed. As for the state in which the one ordered is unable due to his inability, that is from the

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with carrying something that he is unable to carry, and dies as a result; however, it is impermissible for someone to be held responsible for carrying a mountain in the sense that if he carries it he is rewarded and if he does not he is punished."

A similar point is mentioned in *Naẓm al-Farā'id wa-Jama' al-Fawā'id* of Shaykh Zādeh (d. 944 H.) on p. 207: "We do not concede that the statement of the Exalted (and burden us not...) indicates that; rather, it indicates not being burdened with that in which there is no capacity to endure, and as such, there being no punishment or destruction

Imam al-Baydāwī mentioned the positions of both Imams within his exegesis. He said: (Our Lord, and burden us not with more than we can bear), i.e. of afflictions and punishment, or commands that are not within human ability to bear. This proves the permissibility of being held legally responsible for that which there is no capacity to endure, for otherwise delivery from it would not be asked."

things in which there is no legal accountability [*taklif*]. If it is assumed and imagined to exist, it would not be impossible nor would it be foolishness in His attribute, nor would it be pointless.

These words of al-Ash'arī are clear and simple. It is obvious that he only allowed the concept of "being burdened with that which cannot be borne" rationally, and not in actuality.

## CHAPTER VI ON GOOD AND EVIL AND THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT

The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة السادسة: قال الماتريدي: بعض الأحكام المتعلقة بالتكليف معلومٌ بالعقل، لأن العقل آلةٌ يُدركُ بها حُسنُ بعض الأشياء وقُبْحُها، وبها يُدْرَكُ وجوبُ الإيمان وشكرُ المنعم، وإن المَعْرِفَ والموجِبَ هو الله تعالى لكن بواسطة العقل، كما أن الرسول مُعْرِفُ الوجوب، والموجبُ الحقيقيُّ هو الله تعالى لكن بواسطة الرسول ﷺ، حتى قال: (لا عُدْرَ لأحد في الجهل بخالقه لما يرى من خلق السماوات والأرض) و(لو لم يبعث الله رسولاً لوجب على الخلق معرفته بعقولهم).

وقال الأشعري: لا يجب شيءٌ ولا يحرم إلا بالشرع لا بالعقل، وإن كان للعقل أن يُدْرِكَ حُسنَ بعض الأشياء وقُبْحُها، وعند الأشعري: جميع الأحكام المتعلقة بالتكليف مُتَلَفَّاةٌ بالسَّمْعِ.

**Six:** Al-Māturīdī said that some of the rulings that relate to legal accountability [*taklif*] are known by the intellect, because the intellect is a tool by which the goodness and evil of some things can be comprehended, and [it is a tool] by which the obligation of faith is comprehended, as well as [the obligation of] gratitude to the Giver of bounties. The One who makes this known and obligatory is Allah, the Exalted; however, it is through the medium of the intellect— just as the Messenger ﷺ made the obligation[s] known and the One who made [things] obligatory in reality is Allah, the Exalted, however, it was through the medium of the Messenger ﷺ. He [al-Māturīdī] said: “Because of what one sees [of signs] in the creation of the heavens and the



earth, no one is excused by ignorance of his Creator," and: "Had Allah not sent a Messenger, it would have still be obligatory for creation to know Him through their intellects."

Al-Ash'arī said that nothing is made an obligation or a prohibition except by the Sacred Law—not the intellect, even if the intellect is able to comprehend the goodness and evil of some things. According to al-Ash'arī, all of the rulings that relate to legal accountability are taken from revelation.

This issue is based upon the question of good and evil and if they are intrinsic or not. Before explaining this point, we must first explain the question of good and evil. The theologians are known to give the terms good and evil several meanings:

- That which attracts and that which repels. That which attracts is called good and that which repels is called evil.
- An attribute of perfection and an attribute of imperfection. There is no doubt that knowledge is an attribute of perfection in and of itself, which is good, and that ignorance is considered evil.

These two meanings are rational, i.e. they are comprehended without recourse to the Sacred Law. It is enough for man to think about them to reach the conclusion that one is good and the other is evil. It is not hidden that the first meaning has a practical aspect to it, which is why it must be noted that it is only valid to call something that is attractive "good" when one considers its benefit and the attraction held by the one who calls it that. It is not impossible that the same action could be called evil from another angle, and considered relative to another person. This ruling is subject to ascription and restriction.

As for the second meaning, it resembles what is general and unrestricted, except with relative restrictions that are not intrinsic to the thing itself. For instance, when we judge that learning magic is evil, there is no consideration given to the fact that it is nothing more than a type of knowledge that is comprehended; from this angle [of it being knowledge] it is

undoubtedly seen as good. However, since it is noticed that most of those who learn it incline towards evil, the principal ruling applied to magicians is given to the learning of magic as well.

The third meaning given for good and evil is the resultant rewards and punishments that are given for a particular thing. In other words, an action is called good if it results in reward for the one who does it and punishment for the one who leaves it; an action is called evil if it results in a punishment for the one who does it and reward for the one who leaves it and abstains from it.

The epistemological source of this resultant reward or punishment could be empirical<sup>7</sup> or textual.<sup>8</sup> There is no disagreement that it is permissible—in a general sense and without considering the presence or absence of the Sacred Law—for both to be sources for the reward or punishment that result from actions. People judge and punish actions based on conventions and cultural norms, and that does not imply that their judgment is valid in the Sacred Law. Nevertheless, they validate actions based on customs and norms, and there should be no disagreement about that because it is a common occurrence.

What we are speaking about is the rational faculty and whether or not it can comprehend the resultant worldly or after-worldly legal reward (or punishment) for a particular action, without having recourse to the self-same Sacred Law. Worded differently: is there any rational connection (i.e. one that the rational faculty can perceive) between a particular action and reward or punishment, or is this connection arbitrary in the

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<sup>7</sup> In other words, the means by which one may know that something engenders a punishment or reward can be experience through trial and error. A person may carry out a particular action and repeatedly find that it leads to harm, or he may carry out a particular action and repeatedly find that it leads to benefit. By means of this trial and error he can establish an empirical link between the action and its resultant reward or punishment. [t]

<sup>8</sup> In other words, another means by which one may know that something engenders punishment or reward is a revealed source which speaks about the worldly or afterworldly punishments or rewards of an action. [t]

sense that the Law Giver made it as such from His pure will, and that had He willed to not do that, there would be no rational impossibility in it?

There is no disagreement between the scholars of the various Islamic sects that the good and evil expressed in the two former meanings are rational (i.e. they can be comprehended by the rational faculty) and are not conditional upon the existence of the Sacred Law. The disagreement lies in this third meaning of good and evil. Some have said that it is possible for the rational faculty to perceive Allah's ruling for a particular human action, and it is possible for the rational faculty to affirm a resultant reward or punishment for actions without recourse to the Sacred Law or the sending of Prophets.

Some say that this is not possible and that such judgments cannot be made until after the appearance of the Sacred Law and taking the ruling from the Law revealed by Allah; and with Allah there is no rational connection between an action and a reward or punishment. And some have restricted rational knowledge to some rulings only and did not generalize.

This is the formulation of the issue. The basic question is whether actions and things possess an intrinsic goodness or evil in their self-same reality, in the sense that if someone who knows were to perceive it, it would motivate him to perform acts of goodness and abstain from evil?

This is the main question. Is there an intrinsic relationship between good and evil and the action of the doer and his desire for good and abandonment of evil? Taking this further, are the resultant rewards for carrying out an action and the resultant punishments for leaving an action intrinsically tied to the action, or are these [reward and punishment] the result of a distinct and separate will coming from a doer with free-will?

Ahl al-Sunna are in complete agreement, including the Māturīdīs, that all of this is for the Doer who acts with free choice; there is no necessary or intrinsic relationship between good and evil on one hand and actions or the one doing good on the other.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The erudite scholar Muḥib al-Dīn al-Bihārī said in *Musallam al-Thubūt*: "...According to the Ash'arīs they [good and evil] are established

Others (besides Ahl al-Sunna) say that good and evil in this sense are intrinsic and inseparable (from those actions). This resulted in them developing their "doctrine of obligation" [*ijāb*] and what is in [the servant's] best interest [*al-aṣḥāḥ*]. The philosophers believed in the "doctrine of obligation" and the Mu'tazila believed in the doctrine of "best interests." Sometimes, the Shi'a have adopted the doctrine of the philosophers and sometimes they have adopted the doctrine of the Mu'tazila.

Since Ahl al-Sunna are in agreement regarding the aforementioned issue, what is the difference between the statement of the Ash'arīs and the statement of the Māturīdīs?

The Māturīdīs say: there is no doubt that both reward and punishment are by Allah's Will and that He has established and originated them, and the resultant reward or punishment for actions is from Allah. Allah ﷻ has established connections between actions and their effects, and He has placed within our intellects the ability to comprehend these connections. Our intellect's comprehension of these connections varies in strength and weakness; at times we are able to comprehend some of them without recourse to knowledge of the Sacred Law, and we are able to state with intellectual certainty that what we have comprehended is congruent with Allah's ruling, in the sense that if the Sacred Law is revealed, it would only reveal that ruling. Here we see that the rational faculty is a tool by which knowledge is gained about the affirmation and obligation that Allah ﷻ

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through the Sacred Law—that is to say, they are by His [Allah's] decree only. Therefore, what He enjoins is good and what He forbids is loathsome—and if the matter were reversed it would be reversed. According to us [the Māturīdīs] and the Mu'tazila they [good and evil] are rational—that is to say, they do not depend on the Sacred Law. Nevertheless, we maintain that this does not entail a ruling upon the servant; rather, it becomes deserving of the ruling of the All-Wise who does not declare preponderant what is not preponderant. A thing which has not received a Divine judgment is without a judgement, and that is why we maintain that a condition for legal accountability is receiving the invitation [to Islam]—in contradistinction to the Mu'tazila, the Twelvers [Shi'a], the Karrāmiyya, and Barāhima.



affirmed. It is *not* the rational faculty that is affirming independently, nor do the issues themselves imply this resultant connection.

It is clear that up to this point, there is no disagreement with the basic outline we mentioned regarding the question of good and evil, and that the *Māturidīs* do not disagree with the *Ash'arīs* on this. Perhaps though, there could be a disagreement if we were to consider what some of the *Māturidīs* mentioned, that the rational faculty can judge certain issues and that it is rationally impermissible for Allah ﷻ to pardon disbelief or withhold from punishing it, and so on. Undoubtedly if this judgment of their refers to the self-same issue as it is, then it entails that it is not within the scope of the Master King's omnipotence and that He has no choice but to act. But this intent is negated, for we notice that they said that Allah ﷻ is the Judge [*al-Ḥākim*] and that He only judges with wisdom, therefore their judgment refers to wisdom.

If it is an attribute of Allah ﷻ that is additional to Will, then this means that the linkages of will are restricted by what is allowed or necessitated by wisdom. If we say that the linkages of wisdom also refer to the self-same issue as it is, then this is in agreement with the *Mu'tazilī* position. On the other hand, if we say that it refers to Allah's will and choice, then there is no disagreement. This negates the need to consider wisdom an attribute that is additional to will.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Someone might retort: "But the concept of 'believer' is inclusive of Allah's informing that he is in conformity to His commands, which entails that he must be from the people of Paradise and not from the people of Hellfire, or that he must be from the people of reward and not from the people of punishment. This is because it is a legal concept. If we take notice of this fact and say that it is permissible for a believer to be placed in Hellfire, or that it is permissible for the disbeliever to not enter Hellfire, then essentially we are contradicting the emphatic report that negates it, and this is a rational contradiction."

From this angle it can be said that the rational faculty judges it to be unequivocally denied that the believer could abide forever in Hellfire and unequivocally affirmed that the disbeliever will abide forever therein and that he will not be pardoned. That being said, there is no doubt that judging this to be unequivocal—even if it is rational—is still

The Ash'arīs say: even if the rational faculty comprehends this connection, it remains unable to declare with certainty and judge that what it comprehends to be clearly the result. And for this reason, the rational faculty has no judgment to offer here, and the judgment is only in the Sacred Law.

Here we see that the two groups did not differ in the major fundamental that we mentioned. Their disagreement lies in another matter: is the Sacred Law the only tool by which rulings can be comprehended, or is it also possible for the rational faculty to comprehend them? This is not a disagreement in the actual fundamental, which is why the Māturīdīs said that Allah ﷻ placed such proofs and signs for His existence and the obligation to have faith in Him that are sufficient for the rational faculty alone to know the obligation [of faith in Him] and the resultant reward for faith and resultant punishment for disbelief.<sup>11</sup>

The Ash'arīs say that even though it is possible for the rational faculties to establish proofs for Allah's existence—and this is the truth and is supported by many rational proofs—without recourse to the Sacred Law, it is not possible for us to declare with absolute certainty that there is a resultant reward or punishment.

It is very important to note the precise difference between the view of the esteemed Māturīdīs and the view of the Mu'tazila and philosophers. Many people believe that the view of the Māturīdīs in this issue is the same as that of the Mu'tazila, but this is not the case. To the contrary, the disagreement between the Māturīdīs and the Mu'tazila is fundamental in nature, while their disagreement with the Ash'arīs is in the branches and not fundamental in nature.

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derived from a textual premise, namely the Divine report concerning their [the believer and disbeliever's] final abodes. Therefore the proof is entirely textual and not rational. If the aforementioned judgment is rational and given this meaning, there is no disagreement.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion on this, see Appendix: *Taklīf, Dalīl al-Fiṭra* and the Imams of Ahl al-Sunna. [t]

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE WRETCHED AND FELICITOUS

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة السابعة: قال الماتريدية: قد يسعد الشقي وقد يشقى السعيد.  
وقال الأشعري: لا اعتبار بالسعادة والشقاوة إلا عند الخاتمة والعاقبة.

**Seven:** Al-Māturīdī said that the wretched person could become felicitous and that the felicitous person could become wretched. Al-Ash'arī said that there is no consideration given to either felicity or wretchedness except during the end [i.e. death] and the requital.

The Māturīdīs define felicity as Islam—i.e. that one is muslim. So when one is a muslim he or she is considered felicitous. Conversely, wretchedness is defined as disbelief, so when someone is a disbeliever he or she is considered wretched. If someone dies upon Islam he or she is felicitous, and if he or she dies upon disbelief he or she is wretched.

Imam al-Ash'arī defined felicity as dying whilst adhering to Islam, and wretchedness as dying whilst upon disbelief. In considering the concept of felicity and wretchedness, Imam al-Ash'arī only looked at the state of one's death and whether it was upon Islam or disbelief. His idea was based on the premise that a person could live for many years as a muslim and disbelieve just before his death, thereby being wretched in the Hereafter; and conversely, a person could be a disbeliever and embrace Islam just before his death, thereby dying upon Islam and being felicitous on the Last Day. According to al-Ash'arī, consideration is given to the state [of the person] in the hereafter. Explained in this way, it becomes clear that this disagreement is semantic—and this has been stated clearly by many scholars and it is our opinion as well.

Regarding what is said to be in the doctrine of al-Ash'arī, that whoever dies upon faith is felicitous, even during the time of their disbelief, we say that he only gave that ruling in consideration of the fact that felicity is defined dying upon Islam, and that is assumed for this person. This statement does not mean that the person is felicitous whilst in a state of disbelief, because if we assume that he would die in a state of disbelief, we say that he would die in a wretched state. This is what it means when it said that Allah does not cease being pleased with those whom He knows will die upon faith.

According to al-Māturīdī, this means that the felicitous person could become wretched and vice versa if his state changes from faith to disbelief or from disbelief to faith. According to Imam al-Ash'arī, however, felicity and wretchedness are not states that replace each other because each is a ruling given to a person in a specific time, which is the time of his death, and it is either Islam or disbelief.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PARDONING DISBELIEF

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الثامنة: قال الماتريدي: العفو عن الكفر ليس بجائز عقلاً.

وقال الأشعري: يجوز عقلاً لا سمعاً.

**Eight:** Al-Māturīdī said that it is rationally impermissible for disbelief to be pardoned. Al-Ash'arī said that it is rationally permissible but textually impermissible.

Since according to Imam al-Māturīdī, the rational faculty can discover the ruling that Allah has affirmed and chosen, along with its resultant reward or punishment, it is sufficient for knowing the obligations. This means that the rational faculty knows (discovers) the ruling disclosed in the Sacred Law. This is not based on the premise that the legal rulings are rational by nature.

Al-Māturīdī opined that the rational faculty is a tool for knowing the obligations affirmed by Allah. Others said that the rational faculty can discover the ruling that is affirmed in the self-same reality and not by Allah's affirmation thereof. This is the view of the philosophers and some of the Mu'tazila incline to it as well. For this reason, the philosophers were bound by necessary implication to affirm the belief of obligation, and the Mu'tazila were bound by necessary implication to affirm belief in "best interests." Both of these beliefs are based on the implicit affirmation of good and evil that are affirmed in the self-same reality for the actions that come from Allah ﷻ. According to Ahl al-Sunna, Allah acts by His will and there is no intrinsic connection between the command in and of itself, and the resultant reward of punishment for carrying it out.

Imam al-Māturīdī's belief that it is rationally impermissible for disbelief to be pardoned means that the rational faculty has discovered that Allah ﷻ has chosen to not pardon disbelief; linking the obligation to the rational faculty is via discovery

[*kashf*] and not affirmation [as the self-same reality]—just as obligations are linked to the Sacred Law and yet the Law Giver is Allah ﷻ.

Since Imam al-Ash'arī spoke about the rational faculty as a distinct level in itself, he unequivocally stated that it is not rationally obligatory for Allah to reward the believer or punish the disbeliever—meaning, in the self-same reality. He stated clearly, however, that Allah will reward the believer and punish the disbeliever.

Imam al-Ash'arī's opinion looked at the rational faculty as something that indicates something within itself while considering Allah's will. Imam al-Māturīdī's opinion looked at the rational faculty as it considers what comes from the Divine will. For this reason, we say that there is no fundamental disagreement between the two Imams on this issue.

The Ash'arīs sought to prove their position by Allah's words regarding 'Īsā ﷺ: «And when Allah will say: "O 'Īsā, son of Maryam, did you say to the people: 'Take me and my mother as gods besides Allah'?" He will say: "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is in myself and I know not what is in Yourself. Indeed, it is you who is the Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what you commanded me—'to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness. If You should punish them—indeed, they are Your servants; but if You forgive them—indeed, it is You Who is the Exalted in might, All-Wise."»<sup>12</sup>

Imam al-Bayḍāwī explained this inference within his exegesis:

«If You should punish them—indeed, they are Your servants...» That is, if You should punish them, then indeed You would be punishing Your servants, and there is no objection to the Absolute Sovereign in what He does with His dominion. This [wording] indicates that they deserved it because they are Your [Allah's] servants, yet they

<sup>12</sup> Al-Mā'idā: 116-117.

worshipped other than You. ﴿...But if You forgive them—indeed You are the Exalted in Might, All-Wise﴾—so there is no inability or odiousness because You are the All-Capable, the All-Powerful, with ability to reward and punish, the One who does not bestow reward or punish except with wisdom and correctness. Indeed, forgiveness is deemed good for every criminal, so if You punish, it is with justice, and if You forgive, it is a bounty. The unforgiveable nature of polytheism is according to the Divine threat; it is not inherently impossible such that it would be untenable to link it with a conditional “if” [in the aforementioned verse].

It is also possible to infer proof from Allah’s words: ﴿They have certainly disbelieved, those who say that Allah is Christ, the son of Maryam. Say: “Then who could prevent Allah if He had intended to destroy Christ, the son of Maryam, or his mother or everyone on earth?” And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them. He creates what He wills, and Allah is over all things Able.﴾<sup>13</sup>

Imam al-Rāzī said:

It has been established that action depends on motivations [*dawā’i*] and it is impossible for there to be an infinite regress of motivations; rather, they all must stop at one motivation that emerged *within* the servant—not *from* the servant, but from Allah. It is also established that when the motivation emerges there must be an act. Based upon this estimation, all is from Allah, thus ruling out causation from Allah’s acts and rulings. All of this confirms that the outward meaning of this verse is from the ambiguous verses [*mutashābihāt*] and not from the plain verses. This is emphasized by His statement: ﴿“Then who could prevent Allah if He had intended to destroy Christ, the son of Maryam, or his mother or everyone on earth?”﴾ This is an explicit text proving that everything from Allah is good and that His act of creation and His rulings are not dependent on Him tending to the “best interests.”

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<sup>13</sup> Al-Mā’ida: 17.

The Māturīdīs interpreted the verse differently.  
Imam al-Nasafī said:

Al-Zujāj said: "Isā ؑ knew that among them were those who believed and those who were upon disbelief, so he spoke about all of them in general, saying: «...if You should punish them», i.e. if You punish those who disbelieve among them «indeed, they are Your servants» whom You know to have denied Your signs and belied Your Prophets; and You are Just in that, for they have disbelieved after having been obligated [to believe] by the proof against them. «...But if You forgive them», i.e. forgive the one from them who desists and believes, that is from Your pure largesse. «...Indeed it is You Who is the Exalted in might»: nothing You will is impossible. «All-Wise» in that: All-Mighty, All-Powerful, and Able to reward; All-Wise, not punishing save with wisdom and correctness."

The Māturīdīs as a whole, including the Imam of guidance Abū al-Manṣūr [al-Māturīdī] in his *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, said that this issue refers back to wisdom. They maintained that Allah's Divine wisdom necessitates punishment for one who disbelieved and clung to disbelief, and that it is not from wisdom for such a person to be pardoned, because disbelief is intrinsically odious.

We mentioned before that it is possible to understand this as tantamount to affirming the notion that Allah is intrinsically obligated to act. As a result of this, some have considered this equivalent to the Mu'tazilī view on the matter; however, we put forward the proper understanding of this statement and interpreted it in a manner that is consistent [with their rank and position]. We likewise established the difference of opinion in the matter of rulings and good and evil. Allah knows best.



## CHAPTER IX

### ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PUNISHING THE BELIEVERS AND REWARDING THE DISBELIEVERS AND THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة التاسعة: قال الماتريدي: تخليد المؤمنين في النار وتخليد الكافرين في الجنة لا يجوز عقلاً ولا سمعاً.  
وعند الأشعري يجوز عقلاً، وأما سمعاً فلا يجوز.

**Nine:** Al-Māturīdī said it is rationally and textually impermissible for the believers to abide eternally in Hellfire and for the disbelievers to abide in Paradise. Al-Ash'arī said that it is rationally permissible, but textually impermissible.

To explain this issue we refer back to the same points mentioned in the previous issue. Both are based on the concept of good and evil and the idea of the rational faculty as a tool for comprehension and looking into things as they are—or looking into them while taking notice of Allah's will.

There is no connection found in the self-same reality between disbelief and reward and punishment, or faith and reward and punishment. According to Imam al-Ash'arī, had Allah willed for disbelief to result in reward and for faith to result in punishment, there would be nothing to prevent that. As we said, that is based upon the matter as it is in and of itself.

According to al-Māturīdī, it is both rationally and textually impossible for the believer to abide eternally in Hellfire and for the disbeliever to abide eternally in Paradise—and of course, Imam al-Ash'arī agreed with him that it is textually impossible.

Perhaps Imam al-Māturīdī was looking specifically at the intellect as it observes this world in particular, and consequently, he saw that it was rationally impossible just as it is in the Sacred Law. Had he looked at the matter as it is (meaning: in the primary rational judgments and without observation of the existing world) he would have agreed with al-Ash'arī. Can we say the reverse, that had al-Ash'arī based his opinion on the same point of view of al-Māturīdī, he would have reached the same conclusion as he did?

## CHAPTER X

### ON THE NAME, THE THING NAMED, AND THE ACT OF NAMING

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة العاشرة: قال بعض الماتريدية: الاسم والمسمى واحدٌ.

وقال الأشعري بالتغاير بينهما وبين التسمية.

ومنهم من قَسَمَ الاسم إلى ثلاثة أقسام: قَسَمَ عَيْنُهُ، وقَسَمَ غَيْرُهُ، وقَسَمَ لَيْسَ بعينه ولا بغيره.

والاتفاق على أن التسمية غيرهما وهي ما قامت بالمسمَّى، كذا في بداية الكلام.

**Ten:** Some of the Māturīdīs say that the name and the thing named [*al-ism wal-musammā*] are one. Al-Ash'arī believed that there is a distinction between the two and [between them and] the “act of naming” [*tasmiya*]. Some of them divided a name into three categories: itself, other than itself, and a third category that is neither itself nor other than it. There is agreement that the act of naming [*tasmiya*] is other than them [the name and the thing named], and it is what is established with the one named. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.

There is no doubt that the terms “name” and every other term that is considered to be a name indicate meanings that are different from the meanings indicated in the term “the thing named.” The “name” for everything indicates those very things, and “the thing named” is the thing, object, or concept for which the name has been coined, i.e. in order to indicate it. For this reason, the designation for “name” is the designation for “the thing named,” and if we bear in mind their shared designation, it can be said that the “name” and “the thing named” are one and the same; if, however, we bear in mind their distinct meanings for which each have been coined in the language, it can be said

that there is a distinction between the two. Both of them are distinct from the act of naming [*tasmiya*], which is to coin a name for "the thing named."

Of the names that are applied to Allah, some point to the Exalted and Divine Entity itself, some point to aspects of the Divine Entity, some point to qualitative attributes of the Divine Entity, and other names point to the Divine Entity's actions.

The first example is "Thing" and "Existent Being." Both point to the Divine Entity in itself without taking anything else into consideration. For this reason, it may be said: "It [the name] is the Divine Entity insofar as it points to the Divine Entity."

The second example is: "All-Powerful" and "All-Knowing;" both indicate the Divine Entity in the sense that it is described with qualitative attributes that subsist with it. It is not to be said that these attributes are the Divine Entity or other than the Divine Entity—as is well-known.

The third example is: "the Creator," "the Provider," and "the Giver of bounties;" these indicate the Divine Entity in the sense that it is a Doer. Now, there is no doubt that the action is other than the doer and that the action does not indwell in the Entity of the Necessary Existent because it is impossible for contingents to indwell within Him. This is why it is said that this category is not the Divine Entity, i.e. it indicates something else besides the Divine Entity. The verified and sound view is that anything other than the Entity described as the Creator is the action or the object of the action; the action is a relative ascription and the object of the action is something created by Allah ﷻ.

As you can see, the details concerning this issue demonstrate that the disagreement is not merely semantic. Rather, it also goes back to disagreements about wordings and expressions, and comprehending the distinctions between each point of view is very beneficial in understanding the reality of the Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes of Allah ﷻ. This is why you see that most of the scholars who explained Allah's Beautiful Names spoke about this issue, as it is beneficial in explaining the indications, usages, and meanings of the Beautiful Names.

The act of naming is something that subsists within the one who names; the act of naming is therefore distinct from the name and the thing named.



## CHAPTER XI

### ON THE CONDITION OF BEING MALE FOR THE RANK OF PROPHETHOOD

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الحادية عشرة: قال الماتريدي: الذكورة شرط في النبوة، حتى لا يجوز أن يكون الأنثى نبياً.

وقال الأشعري: ليست الذكورة شرطاً فيها، والأنوثة لا تنافيها.  
كذا في بداية الكلام.

**Eleven:** Al-Māturīdī said that being male is a condition for Prophethood, and that consequently, it is impermissible for a woman to be a Prophetess. Al-Ash'arī said that being male is not a condition for it, and that being female does not negate it. This is taken from *Bidāya al-Kalām*.

Imam al-Ash'arī believed that it was permissible for a woman to be a Prophetess. In fact, Ibn Fūrak quoted him as saying that there were four Prophetesses—although none of them were Messengers. Al-Ash'arī inferred this from the words of the Exalted: «And We have not sent before you as Messengers save men...»<sup>14</sup> and the statement of the Prophet: "There were four Prophetesses among women." He used to say that a Messenger is he who is sent to creation, who is ordered to convey the Message, and whom the creation is ordered to obey and follow. One could be a Prophet, yet not be sent as a Messenger or ordered to convey the Message; his distinction from others being in his spiritual state and the miracles invested with him, elevating his status and honour.

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<sup>14</sup> Yūsuf: 109.

Furthermore, Imam al-Ash'arī believed that it is impermissible for a Messenger (or an Imam) to be a woman, a servant, or someone who is deficient in his sense faculties [i.e. blind, deaf, mute, and so on]. The reason why it is impermissible for a Messenger to be a woman is because of her diminished capacities [which would hinder her conveyance of the Message]; as for a servant, it is because he is owned by his master; and as for the one who is deficient in his sense faculties, it is because complete senses are needed for delivering the Message.

Imam al-Ash'arī inferred from some Qur'anic verses that certain women were Prophetesses, such as the mother of Mūsā: «And We inspired the mother of Mūsā: "Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him in the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We shall return him to you and make him one of the Messengers."»<sup>15</sup> And [likewise] Maryam, Āsiya, Sāra, Hājar, and Ḥawā'. The truth of the matter regarding Imam al-Ash'arī's inference is that it is not strong, unless the "revelation" that forms the content of Prophecy is used in an absolute sense that includes any type of conveyance of information, whether it is from the unseen world or Divine rulings, or anything else that refers to the spiritual training that leads to it, as instruction for himself or for others, even it is not connected to the Sacred rulings or Divine realities. On the other hand, if "revelation" is used to describe acquaintance with the realities of the seen and unseen worlds and being taught the Divine rulings that none know of without Allah teaching them directly, then clearly these women were not Prophetesses.

Imam al-Rāzī said, commenting on Allah's words «And [mention] when the Angels said: "O Maryam, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds. O Maryam, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who prostrate."»:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Al-Qaṣaṣ: 7.

<sup>16</sup> Āl 'Imrān: 42.

You should know that Maryam was not from the Prophets, as Allah, the Exalted, said: «And We have not sent before you as Messengers save men to whom We revealed from the people of the cities...» This being the case, Jibril being sent to her is either a miracle for her—and this is the position of those who believe possible the miracles of the saints—or it is a miraculous precursor to 'Īsā's ﷺ Prophethood—and this is allowable by us and by al-Ka'bī of the Mu'tazila. Or, it could be a prophetic miracle of Zakariyyā ﷺ—and this is the position of the majority of the Mu'tazila. Some people say that it was an inspiration and casting into the heart, as it was for the mother of Mūsā ﷺ, mentioned in His statement: «And We inspired the mother of Mūsā...»

Al-Rāzī went on to say:

His statement: «And [mention] when it was revealed to the disciples that they should believe in Me and in My Messenger...» The commentary on revelation has already been mentioned: whoever says that they were Prophets says that this revelation was the revelation given to the Prophets, and whoever says that they were not Prophets says that this revelation refers to inspiration and casting into the heart, as is mentioned in His statements: «And We inspired the mother of Mūsā: "Suckle him..."» and «And your Lord revealed to the bees...»

Imam al-Qurṭubī cited a scholarly consensus that the mother of Mūsā was not a Prophetess. He said:

There is a difference of opinion regarding the revelation given to the mother of Mūsā. One group said that it was a statement imparted to her in her dream vision. Qatāda said: 'It was Divine inspiration.' Another group said that it was through an Angel taking a form for her. Muqātil said: 'Jibril came to her with that.' So based on this it was revelation and informing and not divine inspiration. All of them concur that she was not a Prophetess, and that the sending of an Angel to her was only akin to the Angels who spoke to

the bald man, the leper, and the blind man in the famous Ḥadīth report narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. We mentioned it in [our commentary on] Sūra al-Barā'a [al-Tawba] as well as other reports that mention Angels speaking to people without there being any Prophethood [involved]. An Angel greeted 'Imrān b. Ḥuṣayn although he was not a Prophet.<sup>17</sup>

There appears to us no rational reason why women could not be Prophetesses, unless it is because revelation only connects with that which is [ritually] pure, while women experience menses on certain days, unlike men. In that case it would be impossible for revelation to descend upon women. The default rule is that a Prophet is publicly engaged in summoning others to Allah ﷻ which might not always be appropriate for women considering the inherent mixing with men and women that such a task involves.

There are other possible reasons why women cannot be Prophetesses. Clearly, Allah created men in such a way that they are able to carry the burden of Prophethood and Messengership. For this reason there are many men who were completed, whereas only four women were completed, as is mentioned in the Ḥadīth report narrated by al-Bukhārī from Abū Mūsā ؓ who said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'Many men were completed but no women were completed save Āsiya the wife of Pharaoh, Maryam the daughter of 'Imrān, and the virtue of 'Ā'isha over the rest of the women is like the virtue of *tharīd* over the rest of your foods."

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<sup>17</sup> Muslim narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection from Muṭarrif who said: "'Imrān b. al-Ḥuṣayn ؓ said to me: 'I used to receive greetings [from the Angels] until I got cauterized and it [the greetings] left me until I left it [cauterization] and [then] it [the greetings] came back to me.'" Muslim narrated this via a different route from Muṭarrif who said: "I was sent to go see 'Imrān b. al-Ḥuṣayn while he was on his death bed. He said to me: 'I shall narrate something to you. But should I live through this, you must conceal it (having come from me), and should I die you can narrate it if you like: I have received salutations [from the Angels].'"



On the other hand, since Messengership involves Sacred rulings and laws, it is not permissible for a Messenger to be a woman. Both Imam al-Ash'arī and Imam al-Māturīdī agree on this point—as is known. The legal rationale behind the prohibition of a woman being an Imam indicates why it is forbidden for a Messenger to be a woman.

Considering Imam al-Ash'arī's understanding of the concept of Prophethood, it seems apparent that there is no real disagreement between him and those who denied that women could be Prophetesses.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON THE ACTIONS OF THE CREATOR AND THE ACTIONS OF THE CREATION

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The author—may Allah have mercy upon him—said:

المسألة الثانية عشرة: قال الماتريدي: فعل العبد يُسمى كسباً لا خلقاً، وفعل الحق يُسمى خلقاً لا كسباً، والفعل يتناولهما.  
وقال الأشعري: الفعل عبارة عن الإيجاد حقيقة، وكسب العبد يُسمى فعلاً بالمجاز.

وقيل ما يجوز تفرُّد القادر به فهو خلقٌ، وما لا يجوز تفرد القادر به فهو كسبٌ.

**Twelve:** Al-Māturīdī said that the action of the servant is called acquisition and not creation, and that the action of the Real [Allah] is called creation and not acquisition—and both are inclusive of action. Al-Ash'arī said that "action" denotes a real bringing into existence and the acquisition of the servant is only called "action" figuratively. It has been said: "That which is permissible for the All-Powerful to be singularly [described with] is called creation, and that which is impermissible for the All-Powerful to be described with is called acquisition.

This is the final issue Imam Ibn Kamāl Pāshā speaks about in this precise and subtle treatise. It is not hidden to the reader that Imam al-Ash'arī and Imam al-Māturīdī were in agreement that there is no creator besides Allah ﷻ. The meaning of "creator" is the one who brings all things into being. According to this meaning it is therefore impossible for a servant to be a creator. We mentioned earlier that this much is agreed upon between the two Imams.

Some people erroneously believe that Imam al-Māturīdī believed that man can create from nothingness [*adam*]. They ascribed to him the view that man creates his own actions, in that man brings them into existence after previous non-existence. In his famous book on legal theory, *al-Tawdīḥ Sharḥ al-Tanqīḥ*, the verifying Imam Ṣadr al-Sharī'a established that this view is not authentic and that Imam al-Māturīdī did not hold this belief. We spoke about this issue in more detail in our commentary on the gloss of the erudite Imam Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī. We do not wish to go into detail about the issue here. The claim made by the erudite Imam Ibn al-Humām in *al-Musāyara*, which goes against what we have mentioned here, has been refuted in our lessons in which we commented on his book.

It suffices us here to illustrate the agreement between the two Imams that there is no creator besides Allah (according to the aforementioned meaning). Likewise, both of them agreed that the action of the servant is called "acquisition" [*kasb*] and that the action of Allah is called "creation" [*khalq*], and that creation is not acquisition and that acquisition invests the earner with either perfection or imperfection, whereas the creation of Allah does not invest him with either perfection or imperfection. Allah is perfect in His Entity and attributes, and His perfection does not depend on a contingent matter. We know that all of Allah's actions are contingent; nay, every existing thing besides Him is contingent. By His creation of the universe, Allah ﷻ did not acquire an attribute that He did not possess before its creation—Exalted is He! For this reason, acquisition implies that man is described with it, because it subsists with him, contrary to the act of creation.

The act of creation depends on detailed knowledge of the creation, whereas acquisition suffices with a general knowledge. These distinctions are sufficient for this short treatise.

The point of disagreement between al-Aşh'arī and al-Māturīdī is that al-Aşh'arī says that the word "action" is applied literally and means to bring something into existence from nothing, and for this reason, Allah ﷻ is literally described as a Doer [Fā'il]. The servant, on the other hand, is figuratively described as a doer.

Imam al-Māturīdī said that applying the words “action” and “acquisition” to the creation is literal. It is noteworthy to mention that some scholars mentioned another distinction between creation and acquisition. They said that creation only depends on the power of the specific doer, and that acquisition does not depend on mere power; rather, it also depends on the Power of the Creator. For this reason, some scholars said: “Allah’s power is linked with the acquired action in one sense, and is linked with the servant’s power in another sense.”

It should not be hidden to the intelligent reader that Imam al-Ash‘arī did not negate that man is qualified with power, and I clarified this issue in my refutation of Ibn Rushd al-Ḥafīd’s [Averroes] *Manāhij al-Adilla*. Having said that, the effect of that power is not in bringing something into existence from non-existence, but rather it is the acquisition of that which Allah created and brought from non-existence. For this reason, man’s power is only linked to existing things, whereas this is not the case for Allah’s power. In other words, Allah’s power affects the contingently possible, bringing it into existence after non-existence; man’s power is only linked to that which exists via acquisition and not independent creation.



## CONCLUSION

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**B**Y ALLAH'S BOUNTY, this marks the conclusion of our commentary on this noble treatise regarding the points of disagreement between Imam al-Māturīdī and Imam al-Ash'arī. In this commentary, we have sufficed with the issues mentioned by the author himself, even though we are aware of other disagreements between them. Our intention in this commentary was to assist the novice student of the science of Divine Oneness in understanding the reality of these disagreements and how to grasp the issues—by using the intellect to understand the meanings and not merely looking at the words. Intelligent thought is acquired through the vehicle of meanings and not mere words.

We ask Allah ﷻ to grant us success in doing that which He loves and is pleased with, and to elevate our ranks in this world and the next. Indeed, He is All-Hearing, the One who responds to supplications. May Allah send His prayers and salutations upon our Master Muhammad, the noblest of creation and best of the Prophets and Messengers. We ask Allah ﷻ to increase us and all of creation in love for His Prophet ﷺ, that they may find it easy to have faith in him and adhere to the upright religion with which he was sent. This adherence and submission will enable us to attain our worldly and after-worldly perfections, by Allah's bounty, favour, and generosity.

The one impoverished and in need of his Lord's pardon and assistance,

Sa'īd Foudah

12.03.2005

## APPENDIX

### *TAKLĪF, DALĪL AL-FIṬRA AND THE IMAMS OF AHL AL-SUNNA*

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**I** RECEIVED SOME QUESTIONS from a dedicated student of knowledge. I will reproduce them here along with the answers for added benefit.

#### Letter

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May prayers and salutations be upon the noblest of the Prophets and Messengers, our liege lord Muhammad, and upon all of his Family and Companions.

Here are some questions for which we hope to find answers from our noble Shaykhs—may Allah preserve them and allow others to benefit from their knowledge.

1. It is well-known that there exists a disagreement between the Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs on the issue of *taklīf*. According to the Ash'arīs, man is not held legally accountable until the invitation [*da'wa*] reaches him. According to the Māturīdīs, man is only held legally accountable for knowledge [of Allah], even if the invitation does not reach him.

My question is the following: what is the operative meaning that the assign to knowledge here? Does it mean only faith in the existence of God, or faith in His existence along with affirmation of His attributes? For instance, do they hold that someone will attain salvation if he believes in the existence of God but does not believe in His Oneness or everlastingness, or not?

If that person will not attain salvation—as is apparent from their words—then to what extent is that person held accountable for knowledge [of God]? And what are the attributes that he must know in order to save himself from Hell-fire? Are they the attributes of existence and

oneness only, or do they include every attribute that the rational mind can infer and whose confirmation does not depend on an inimitable miracle?

My question is the following: what is the operative meaning that the assign to knowledge here? Does it mean only faith in the existence of God, or faith in His existence along with affirmation of His attributes? For instance, do they hold that someone will attain salvation if he believes in the existence of God but does not believe in His Oneness or everlastingness, or not?

2. The Wahhābīs deny rational proofs and instead cling to the innate-nature proof [*dalīl al-fiṭra*]. Does this mean that they, like the Māturīdīs, believe that the one to whom the invitation has not reached is still held legally accountable for the basis of faith? If so, is the difference between them and the Māturīdīs on this issue in that they obligate faith via the so called innate-nature proof, whereas the Māturīdīs obligate it via rational proof?

3. Has any of the Imams of Ahl al-Sunna gone against the Aşh'arīs and Māturīdīs and adopted the Wahhābī position on the innate-nature proof?

I hope that my questions are clear. May Allah reward you with goodness.

### Response

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May prayers and salutations be upon the best of the Prophets and Messengers, our liege lord Muhammad, and upon his Family and Companions and all who follow their way until the Last Day.

First, I would like to thank the virtuous sister for her keenness to gain knowledge and for her poignant questions that clearly demonstrate her impressive effort to understand the words of Ahl al-Sunna, the Aşh'arīs. Her questions also demonstrate her

desire to know the ways in which the proofs and positions of the Ash'arīs in various issues are preponderant over those of other Islamic groups.

The foundation upon which the Ash'arīs based their statement in this matter is the fact that there is no inherent link between the perceptions of knowledge and the confirmation of Sacred rulings. It is possible for someone to know the truth of some matters using his rational faculty, such as the affirmation of Allah's existence and the impossibility of His non-existence, and the negation of polytheism and multiple gods; however, according to them [the Ash'arīs] this mere rational knowledge of these things does not imply that he must have faith in them, insomuch as it is an obligation that results in punishment or reward.

As for the Mu'tazila, they made that an obligation in many legal matters (both in doctrine and practical rulings) based upon their doctrine of "intrinsic good and evil that is dictated by the intellect." They drew a distinction between that which they know with their intellects and that which they do not know, saying that which they do know is proven via the intellect and that which they do not know is without proof. For this reason, they seek recourse in the Sacred Law and do not seek to do without it. According to them, it is impossible for the Sacred Law to contradict the intellect—and they differ from Ahl al-Sunna in what they view as correct or incorrect. As for the principle itself, they do not object to it.

As for the Māturīdīs, they say that man is obligated to know Allah ﷻ. Their proof for this is that Allah ﷻ established such signs for His existence that are enough for the person possessed of intellect to know His existence. So these manifest signs are sufficient in knowing the inherent connection between knowledge [of Allah] and the Sacred ruling. According to the Māturīdīs, the obligation of knowing is by Allah making it as such; however, it is with the pre-condition of the intellect. Now, intellect by itself is not enough on its own for there to be an obligation; rather, it must be conditional upon the delivery [of the Message].



The Ḥanafīs state that what is obligatory upon a rational person is to know the Creator of the universe via rational proofs; not to know the reality of Allah ﷻ because that is not within the scope of man's knowledge. As for intuitive knowledge via mystical inspiration [*ilhām*], although it is possible, it is not within the realm of legal accountability because it is a Divine gift and for the likes of it there is no legal accountability—and this is a matter of consensus. What is meant here by rational proofs is for one to know with unequivocal proof that the Most Exalted exists and to know what is necessary and impossible for Him.

Imam Abū al-Yusr al-Pazdawī said: "Allah is the One who makes it an obligation; however, it is by means of the intellect, therefore, according to them it is a cause for the obligation."

Imam Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī said:

To whomever the revelation has not reached and he is possessed of intellect, and yet he did not know his Lord: is he excused or not? According to us he is not excused. It is obligatory upon him to infer that there is a Maker for the universe just as the companions of the cave inferred when they said: «Our Lord is the lord of the heavens and the earth», and just as Ibrāhīm ؑ inferred: «And when he saw sun rising he said: "This is my Lord"» until He [Allah] said [quoting Ibrāhīm]: «...indeed I am innocent of that which you take as partners.» The Mu'tazila say: "It is not obligatory to infer via the intellect, but the intellect makes it obligatory upon him to know Allah, the Exalted."

The erudite scholar al-Bayyāḍī said in *Ishārāt al-Marām min 'Ibārāt al-Imām*:

During the moment of inferring it is obligatory by the intellect alone—and not by the sending [of Prophets] and the conveyance of the call—to know His existence, Exalted is He, and His Oneness, His knowledge, His omnipotence, His speech, His will, the contingency of the world, that the inimitable miracle proves the veracity of the Messenger; it is obligatory to have faith in him and it is forbidden to disbelieve or belie him. Goodness that takes the meaning of the deserving of praise and reward, and odiousness

that takes the meaning of the deserving of blame and punishment for belying, is generally rational; in other words, it is known by knowing the ruling about the Maker during the moment of inferring these ten things, as is mentioned in *al-Tawḍīḥ* and elsewhere, not by the intellect dictating what is good and evil and not universally as the Mu'tazila claimed.<sup>18</sup>

Ponder deeply over the Qur'anic verses and you will see the mode of inference relied upon by all of the scholars, and which was taken by the Ḥanafis as a proof that it is rationally obligatory to know [Allah].

Allah ﷻ said: (And mention when Ibrāhīm said to his father Āzar: "Do you take idols as gods? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error." And thus did We show Ibrāhīm the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain. So when the night covered him, he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I like not those that set." And when he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the misguided." And when he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my lord, this is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! Indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of the idolaters." And his people argued with him. He said: "Do you argue with me concerning Allah while He has guided me? And I fear not what you associate with Him [and will not be harmed] unless my Lord should will something. My Lord encompasses all things in knowledge; then will you not remember? And how should I fear what you associate while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah that which He has not sent down to you any authority? So which of the two parties has more right to security, if you should know?" Those who believe and confuse not their faith with injustice [idolatry]—those will have security

<sup>18</sup> Al-Bayyāḍī, *Ishārāt al-Marām min 'Ibārāt al-Imām*, p. 54. This is a beneficial book on Divine Oneness according to the Ḥanafī school.

and they are rightly guided. And that was Our argument which We gave Ibrāhīm against his people. We raise by degrees whom We will. Indeed, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.)<sup>19</sup>

This is a rational contemplation. For the one who understands, the rational is not separated from the psychological and spiritual. The same cannot be said for the person who does not understand. He thinks that rational contemplation consists of merely conceptualizing terms in his mind, and so due to his ignorance he wonders: if this is really rational investigation, how can it lead to faith? In His Mighty Book, Allah ﷻ explained that this was the argument He gave to Ibrāhīm against his people. Obviously, Ibrāhīm was not misguided before that. Rather, he brought these arguments that he may establish them against his people who denied this belief.

As for the Wahhābīs, they believe that the innate-nature [*fiṭra*] is one of the proofs for Allah. They do not believe it is the only proof. There exists a difference of opinion between them on the formulation of the way to know Allah ﷻ. Ibn Taymiyya was of the view that the intellect is sufficient to know the existence of Allah ﷻ to infer proof of His attributes and what is permissible and what is impossible for Him. After that, there is no harm [according to him] to gain knowledge [of these things] through the Sacred Law. As he saw it, knowledge of Allah and knowledge of the fundamentals of the religion are both soundly established by rational and textual proofs and both are sufficient. When he would speak of rational proofs he meant the proofs that are not self-evident but are based on premises that entail certain rational conclusions. Now, some of these premises are self-evident and some are not self-evident.

Ibn Taymiyya did not oppose this, contrary to the claims of some ignorant secularists who don the garb of Islam and make it seem as if they are more knowledgeable about Ibn Taymiyya than he was about himself. They allege that he denied that rational proofs can prove the existence of Allah and the fundamentals of the religion. It is obvious to any intelligent person that this is nothing more than a lie against Ibn Taymiyya. Our disagreements with Ibn Taymiyya are like his disagreements with us. The

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<sup>19</sup> Al-An'ām: 74-83.

disagreement between us is not because he allegedly objected to our belief that the existence of God can be proven with rational evidence; to the contrary, he explicitly stated that there are in fact unequivocal proofs for Allah's existence. The disagreement between us and him is regarding which specific proof is correct. He had his own proofs, claimed that some proofs contradict other proofs used by Ahl al-Sunna, and shared with them in the usage of other proofs.

Perhaps it can be said that the dispute has to do with what a specific proof entails—after having agreed that it affirms Allah's existence. His reason for objecting to some of the proofs held by Ahl al-Sunna is that, just as those proofs establish Allah's existence, they also establish that it is must to negate the belief that contingents subsist within His Exalted Entity. This is why we see that Ibn Taymiyya went to great lengths in denying these specific proofs. Ibn Taymiyya did in fact make use of other proofs that establish Allah's existence but do not negate the belief regarding the subsistence of contingents within the Divine Entity or negate resemblance except in a manner that is not self-evident, or through some other means. After making use of these proofs, he would attempt to demonstrate how they do not contradict his own beliefs. This is where the disagreements between him and us lie. I pointed this out in my book *al-Kāshif al-ṣaghīr*, in the chapter on innate-nature.

In reading some of his words one might get the impression that he only believed in the innate-nature proof. As he saw it, the innate-nature is not an array of facts held within man from the time of his birth. Had he said that, he would have gone against the explicit texts of the Qur'an which negate that. According to him, innate-nature is comprised of specific mental and investigative aptitudes which, if utilized correctly by someone who also frees his heart from obstacles and ponders the universe and creation around him, will arrive at clear-cut rational knowledge of Allah's existence. After that, what remains for him is to either believe or disbelieve.

Ibn Taymiyya called this the innate-nature proof because its resultant knowledge of Allah's existence is extremely simple and it does not entail great difficulty. Nay, its proof is easily understood to most people, not to mention that it endures,



from before the sending of Messengers and after; however, the creation is not taken to account for it until after the sending of the Messengers. This is the apparent meaning of Ibn Taymiyya's position.

Some Wahhābīs have claimed that knowledge of Allah's existence is ingrained within human nature and that it is an innate sensation created by Allah, although it might diminish for one reason or another and thus in need of things that will awaken it and guide it (such as pain that may strike one, or a harm that comes his way, awakening him to this reality). The apparent meaning of this claim is that Allah creates an innate-knowledge within man's essence from the time of his birth that does not depend on investigation or acquisition. Undoubtedly this is problematic for any person of intellect, especially considering the verse in the Holy Qur'an: *«And Allah took you out from your mothers' wombs and you knew nothing.»*<sup>20</sup>

If by innate-nature they mean that, with valid rational investigation, man can easily conclude that this universe has a creator, then that is correct and there is no disagreement between us and them on that point. The problem is that they call this the innate-nature proof, and thus this sometimes leads people to believe that knowledge of the Creator's existence is innately known within man from the time of his birth.

Now, if the innate nature is the self-same sensation that Allah has created within man—regardless of whether it exists in man from the time of his birth or not, and regardless of whether it is created in all people or only some—in the sense that this sensation comprises of knowledge of Allah's existence (meaning the internal information concerning Allah's existence), then from one angle it might be considered a proof and from another angle it might not be considered a proof. This is because a "proof" is what leads to a desired conclusion if there is correct investigation in it. This is the relied upon definition held by many of the verifying scholars. It is based upon the distinction made between a thing which proves something and that which is proven by it. What is sought after is knowledge (apprehension) of a certain proposition or it is the sought-after statement that the self is

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<sup>20</sup> Al-Nahl: 78.

attached to and submits to. If we assume for argument's sake that the innate-nature of a human is the self-same knowledge and sensation of Allah's existence, then the proof and what is proved by it will be identical, which cannot be.

Some of the followers of Ibn Taymiyya mention the innate-nature proof separately from the clear-cut rational proof that is based upon investigation. Some of them even explain this innate-nature in a specific way that in essence refers back to the universals of rational thought as known by the scholars! It is no secret to you that Allah can create within some people knowledge of Him whereby they know Allah with self-evident knowledge. By self-evident knowledge we mean the knowledge and apprehension that Allah places within man. This point was mentioned by our scholars among the Ash'arīs. They said that it is possible for Allah to make some sciences that are not self-evident to be self-evident. This could be called Divine inspiration [*ilhām*] or it could be called innate-nature, or [given] any other name. Once the meaning of this is known, there is no issue taken with the exact term used for it.

We ask Allah ﷻ to grant both us and you success in gaining knowledge and working righteous acts, and we ask that He allows our end to be one that is upon guidance and faith—by His bounty and largesse. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may prayers and salutations be upon our liege lord Muhammad, the best of the Prophets and Messengers.

## AUTHOR'S BIBLIOGRAPHY

By Shaykh Galāl 'Alī 'Āmer al-Jihānī

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HAYKH Sa'īd Foudah has written more than one hundred books on various topics, most of which have not yet been published. These topics include creed, theology, legal theory, the explanation of Hadith and refutations of those who differ from the way of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a*, as well as debates with non-muslims. Shaykh Sa'īd has also written numerous articles and annotated and introduced many books upon the way of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a* which have been published on the internet.

These are some of the titles that have been published:

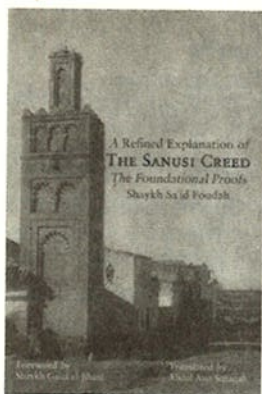
- ❖ Al-Adilla al-'Aqliyya 'alā Wujūd Allāh bayn al-Mutakallimīn wal-Falāsifa
- ❖ Aṣḥāb al-Nār wa-Maṣīruhum
- ❖ Bayān al-Zā'if min Mughālatāt Amīn Nāyif
- ❖ Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Kalām
- ❖ Al-Dalīl al-Kawnī 'alā Wujūd Allāh Ta'āla
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- ❖ Hāshiya 'alā Sharḥ Ṣughrā al-Ṣughrā lil-Imām al-Sanūsī fī 'Ilm al-Tawḥīd
- ❖ Ḥusn al-Muḥājaja fī Bayān 'an Allāh lā Dākḥīl al-'Ālam wa-lā Khārijahu
- ❖ Al-Kāshif al-Ṣaghīr 'an 'Aqā'id Ibn Taymiyya
- ❖ Kifāya al-Sā'ī fī Fahm Maqūlāt al-Sijā'ī
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- ❖ Al-Mawqif, Muqaddima li-Ikhtiṣār Kitāb Mawqif al-'Aql wal-'Ilm wal-'Ālim min Rabb al-'Ālamīn wa-'Ibādihī al-Mursalīn li-Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabīrī

- ❖ Mukhtaṣar Sharḥ al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya lil-Imām al-Dardīr fī 'Ilm al-Tawḥīd
- ❖ Al-Muyassar fī Sharḥ al-Sullam al-Munawraq fī al-Manṭiq al-Akhḍarī
- ❖ Mustaqbal al-'Allāqa ma'a al-Shī'a
- ❖ *Naqḍ al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya li-Ibn Taymiyya*  
[A Critique of the Palmyran Creed  
Deconstructing Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of Resemblance]
- ❖ Ta'īd al-Manṭiq
- ❖ Tafnīd al-Usus al-Nazariyya wal-'Amaliyya lil-Ilḥād
- ❖ Al-Taḥbīr fī Tafsīr Thalātha Āyāt min al-Dhikr al-Ḥakīm
- ❖ *Tahdhīb Sharḥ al-Sanūsiyya* [Umm al-Barāhīn]  
[A Refined Explanation of the Sanūsī Creed  
The Foundational Proofs]
- ❖ Al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr 'alā al-'Aqīda al-Tahāwiyya
- ❖ ***Sharḥ Risāla Ibn Kamāl Pāshā fī al-Ikhtilāf bayna al-Ash'ā'ira wal-Māturīdiyya***  
[A Commentary upon Ibn Kamāl Pashā's  
The Differences between the Ash'arīs & Māturīdīs]
- ❖ *Rafa al-Ishtibāh 'an Kulliyā Lafẓ al-Ilāh*
- ❖ Rūḥ al-Uṣūl fī 'Ilm al-Uṣūl

Edited and annotated:

- ❖ *Risāla fī Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya fī Mas'ala Ḥawādith lā Awwal laha lil-Imām al-Ikhmīmī*
- ❖ *Misbāḥ al-Arwāḥ fī Uṣūl al-Dīn lil-Imām al-Bayḍāwī*
- ❖ *Risāla fī 'Aqā'id lil-Imām 'Alā al-Dīn al-Bukhārī*
- ❖ *Ta'liqāt 'alā Kitāb al-Maḥṣūl fī 'Ilm al-Uṣūl lil-Imām Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī*
- ❖ *Ta'liqāt 'alā Ajwiba al-Juwaynī 'alā As'ila 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ṣaqqālī*
- ❖ *Al-Durra al-Farīda fī Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id lil-Shaykh 'Alwān al-Ḥama*





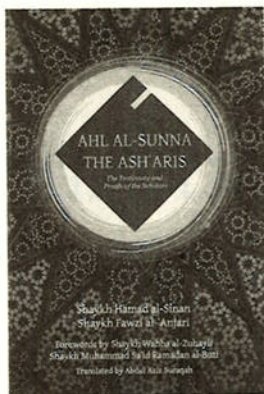
*The Foundational Proofs* of Imam al-Sanusi is one of the foundational works in Islamic theology and is considered historically as an elemental text in traditional Islamic education. Studied for centuries and memorized by children throughout the Islamic world, *The Foundational Proofs* offers readers a methodical outline of Islamic doctrine that satisfies the mind and the heart alike. In this age of mass confusion and intellectual malaise, where fundamental Islamic beliefs are misunderstood and

credulity is championed as faith, *The Foundational Proofs* explains the tenets of faith and supports them both rationally and textually.

Further enhancing the value of this work is the engaging and relevant additions of Shaykh Sa'id Foudah, one of the world's leading Islamic theologians today, who presents Imam al-Sanusi's work with the interlineal commentary of Imam Ahmad b. 'Isa al-Ansari and engaging and detailed footnotes collated from a variety of famous commentaries, such as those by Imam al-Bajuri, Imam al-Battawi, Imam al-Sawi, Imam al-Marghani, and others, as well as his own insightful comments.

One of the most important tasks for a person to engage in is earnest research into the doctrines of the Islamic faith. That is because the religion of Islam is based upon proofs and sound evidence; it does not contradict science or violate the fundamentals of rationality. Fundamentally, the religion of Islam is based upon rationality, and while it is true that it does not ignore the emotional aspect of religion, faith that is not grounded in the intellect is not considered perfect faith, nor is it capable of withstanding or confronting false beliefs, specious arguments, or the doubts that are spread in each age. Here Shaykh Sa'id Foudah has taken it upon himself to explicate the foundational beliefs of Islam and tenets of faith as based on the intellect, and to demonstrate their congruity with and non-contradiction to logic and science.

—Shaykh Galal al-Jihani




In an age in which intra-Muslim religious argumentation dominates, heterodox groups have tried and had great success in presenting their beliefs as normative Islam to the average lay Muslim. Unfortunately many of these beliefs are largely at odds with the classical articulations of Sunni orthodoxy throughout the ages.

This work, *Ahl al-Sunna: The Ash'aris*, aims to remedy this problem. Drawing from the works of Islam's greatest scholars through the centuries, Shaykh Hamad al-Sinan and Shaykh Fawzi al-Anjari detail the genesis, rise, beliefs, and contributions of the Ash'ari school of theology, and address—in a refreshingly fair-minded and non-sectarian way—common misconceptions about the Ash'ari school and demonstrate how its rich religious discourse is firmly anchored in the Qur'an, the Sunna, the way of the Companions, and sound reasoning.

The book in front of us is a useful and blessed endeavour that clarifies what Shaykh al-Islam and Imam amongst the Imams, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, was upon: a creed free from anthropomorphism or negation of Allah's attributes. His was indeed the creed of the pious predecessors [*Salaf*]. Through its compelling arguments, numerous scholarly quotes, and discussions by prominent scholars, *Ahl al-Sunna: The Ash'aris* succeeds in its aim, and is added to the long list of works compiled by Hadith scholars and theologians who defended Imam Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, such as Ibn 'Asakir's *Tabyin Kadhīb al-Muftari* (Clarifying the Lie of the Calumniator), al-Bayhaqi's declaration in the beginning of his compilation on belief entitled *al-I'tiqad*, and others... May Allah reward the two authors with goodness for their eagerness through this work to defend the tenets of faith upheld by the vast majority of Muslims.

—Shaykh Husayn 'Abd al-'Ali

# THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ASH'ARĪS & MĀTURĪDĪS

*By Imam Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad  
b. Sulaymān Kamāl Pāshā* 

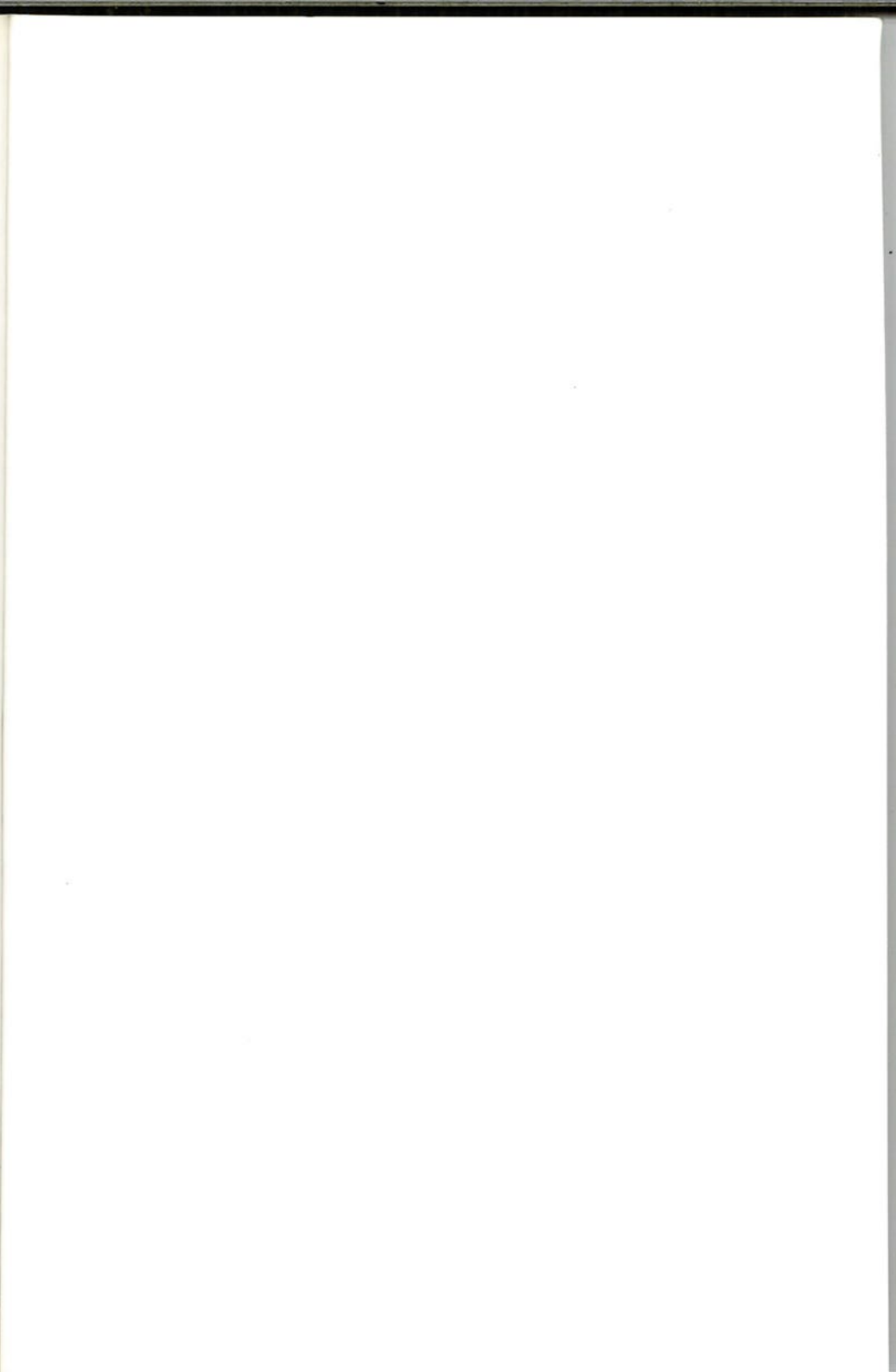
شرح رسالة الاختلاف بين الأشاعرة والماتريدية  
الامام شمس الدين احمد بن سليمان المعروف بابن كمال باشا

Commentary by  
Shaykh Sa'īd 'Abd al-Laṭīf Foudah

Author's Bibliography by  
Shaykh Galāl 'Alī 'Āmer al-Jihānī

Translated by Abdul Aziz Suraqah

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Man is not complete until he is acquainted with the sciences by which he is able to act. The best of these is the science of Divine Oneness. It is the greatest knowledge, the medicine of the hearts, the basis for righteous actions, and the foundation of spiritual wayfaring unto the Lord of the worlds.

—Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah

In *The Differences between the Ash'aris & Maturidis*, Shaykh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, Imam Ibn Kamal Pasha identifies twelve areas where the Imams of Ahl al-Sunna—Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi—have subtly differed in theology. Topics discussed include amongst others, the attributes and actions of Allah, the question of good and evil, the role of the human intellect, man's capabilities and his condition in the Hereafter.

Invaluable in elaborating on these differences is the expert commentary of leading contemporary theologian Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah in which he succinctly explains the causes of the disagreements and their levels, allowing the reader to benefit from the objective of the treatise.

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THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ASH'ARIS & MATURIDIS

by Imam Shams al-Din Ahmad b. Sulayman Kamal Pasha & Commentary by Shaykh Sa'īd Foudah

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